

S E R M O N S

T O

Y O U N G W O M E N :

I N T W O V O L U M E S.

By JAMES FORDYCE, D.D.

T H E F O U R T H E D I T I O N,

W I T H A D D I T I O N S A N D A L T E R A T I O N S.

V O L U M E I I.

D U B L I N :

Printed for A. LEATHLY, J. HOEY, J. EXSHAW,
H. SAUNDERS, W. WATSON, and J. HOEY, Jun.
M.DCC.LXVI.



CONTENTS

OF THE

SECOND VOLUME.

SERMON VIII.

On Female Virtue, with Intellectual
Accomplishments.

I TIM. ii. 8, 9.

*I will—that women adorn themselves with So-
briety.*

PROV. iv. 5, 6, 8, 9.

*Get Wisdom, get Understanding.—Forsake her
not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and
she shall keep thee.—Exalt her, and she shall
promote thee.—She shall give to thy head an
ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she
deliver to thee.*

Page 3

a 2

SER-

C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N IX.

On Female Piety.

I TIM. ii. 10.

—Which becometh women professing Godliness.

P R O V. xxxi. 30.

Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, She shall be praised.

Page 35

S E R M O N X.

On the same Subject.

Page 69

S E R M O N XI.

On Female Devotion and Good Works.

I TIM. ii. 8, 9, 10.

I will—that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array, but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.

P. 99

S E R-

C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N XII.

On Female Meekness.

I P E T. iii. 3, 4.

Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel: but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a Meek and Quiet Spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

Page 153.



S E R M O N VIII.

O N

F E M A L E V I R T U E.

W I T H

I N T E L L E C T U A L A C C O M P L I S H M E N T S.



S E R M O N VIII.

On Female Virtue, with Intellectual Accomplishments.

1 Tim. ii. 8, 9.

I will—that women adorn themselves with Sobriety.

P R O V. iv. 5, 6, 8, 9.

Get Wisdom, get Understanding.—Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee : love her, and she shall keep thee.—Exalt her, and she shall promote thee.—She shall give to thy head an ornament of grace : a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.

ON the subject of Intellectual Accomplishments much remains to be said. At a time when they are neglected by so many women, who, if they read at all, read only for a little transient amusement, they cannot surely, considering their importance, be inculcated too strongly. They may, it is true, be perverted. What is there of the greatest moment, that may not? Because works fit only for the veil of darkness have been wrought in the face of day, does it follow that “light is not sweet, “ or that it is not a pleasant thing for the eyes

“ to behold the sun;” or that benefits innumerable are not derived to mankind from the resplendent luminaries of Nature? Were those extinguished, what were this world? And what, think ye, must be that mind, where all is enveloped in a night of ignorance? “ For the soul,” says Solomon, “ to be without knowledge is not good.” Of so great a defect do we not see every day the unhappy consequences in the conduct of both sexes?

WITH regard to yours, my beloved sisters, I am willing to impute much of the folly and misery that involve multitudes of women, not to their being altogether unacquainted with the main out-lines of their duty, traced by the hand of God on every heart a little more or a little less clearly; but to their want of that relish for knowledge, and of those attainments in it, which certainly tend to exclude many temptations, and to fortify against the influence of others. On this account, I must again and again urge the Culture of your Minds. Your Virtue, your Sobriety is intimately concerned in it. That shall be my first argument: its connexion with your dignity or figure in life shall be my second; and my third shall turn on its usefulness to promote your comfort and felicity: considerations surely that merit your attention. I pray God to bless them for your improvement.



I BEGIN

S E R M O N VIII. 5

I BEGIN with shewing, that the Intellectual Accomplishments briefly delineated in the preceding discourse will have a tendency to exclude many temptations. To what dangerous resources are the generality of young women driven by the love of pleasure and amusement, ill directed! Having formed no taste for those that arise from reading, writing, agreeable reflections, and rational conversation, their passions, naturally ardent, fly without previous examination to every object which flatters that ardour by promising all the vivacity of joy. In this career, it is not difficult to conceive what snares may entrap Beauty, and what habits may corrupt Innocence. When first entered on, it is very possible that no evil is intended. For that very reason none is suspected; and this confidence betrays. When Vice begins to unveil her daring front, Conscience is startled, and shrinks from the monster. But curiosity, opportunity, importunity, the flatteries of self-deceit, the dreams of youthful fancy, the bias of fashion, the fear of banter should they venture to oppose; all these concur with the powers of darkness in misleading the poor unexperienced adventurers; and to courses, of which the bare idea filled them at a distance with horror, familiarity at last reconciles them; if not so far as to procure real, or thorough approbation, far enough however to engage perseverance attended with a feeling of remorse that gradually abates, till

6 S E R M O N VIII.

they are often inextricably entangled in a thick-
et of guilt and wretchedness.

WHAT numbers of miserable beings are now lost there, whose first deviations were occasioned by nothing more than a desire of escaping from inactivity or dulness to something that might divert or employ ! But had an early love of books prevented this languor, by furnishing at home a harmless and varied entertainment, such as was adapted to give play even to the liveliest imagination, there had been evidently much less inducement to seek it abroad; and many a soul that is at this day hurrying on to destruction, might probably, in that case, have been walking with Wisdom and Happiness. Nor would I have you think, that I speak of those only, who have broke through all the restraints of decorum. There are a thousand tracks leading to sin and woe, besides that infamous road to which the hand of public censure is pointed.

THE supposing, indeed, so wide a distance between the extremities of guilt, and its intermediate stages, is among the most natural mistakes of a mind destitute of knowledge. Of this internal light one of the great advantages is, to throw such illumination on virtue and vice through all their essential, and even many of their minute distinctions, as to make them be discerned with clearness, and felt with conviction ;

viction; while there rise up to view nameless beauties in holiness, and nameless deformities in sin, that pass unheeded by the dim inattentive eye of an understanding uninformed. This delicacy of perception alone, in a breast not yet corrupted by evil custom, will create a salutary dread of many pursuits and connexions, that often prove exceedingly hurtful. In general, it seems obvious, that by how much more we are acquainted with our duty, by so much the juster apprehensions we have of its importance, and by so much the greater capacity for performing it.

BUT the grand use of an affection for knowledge, as to the point before us, is that of preventing idleness and dissipation, which it certainly does where such affection is properly regulated; and this cannot be repeated too frequently, nor pressed too powerfully. The human mind was made for action. In virtuous action consists its highest enjoyment. It will not, it cannot continue long unemployed, especially during the sprightly season of youth. Even feeble age finds its principal delight in recollecting the days of juvenile activity, and rehearsing the enterprises which distinguished that happy period. But now there are many young ladies, whose situation does not supply a sphere of domestic exercise sufficient to fill up that part of their time, which is not necessarily appropriated to female occupations

8 S E R M O N V I I I .

and innocent amusements. What then shall they do with it, or with themselves, if books are not called in to their assistance? Pursue the enquiry in your own minds. Many of you, alas! are but too well qualified to pursue it, can but too well imagine the insipid, foolish, and pernicious expedients, which under those circumstances are daily practised for killing time and thought.

IN truth, it cannot appear surprising to see those who have no notion of internal entertainment, hunting after fashionable diversions. For my part, I am only surprised, when those who from a better education have had opportunities of knowing what an extent and diversity of ideas and imagery, of information the most grateful to the mind, and of description the most affecting to the heart, may be found in a well chosen library; when such, I say, do yet prefer to all this the hollowness and dulness, which inseparably attend a perpetual train of public amusements, or private visiting.

BUT I am inclined to hope, that a preference so unjust and unwise, is seldom made by those last mentioned; that they who have tasted the pleasure of conversing intimately with the best authors living and dead, and from this happy commerce have contracted an intellectual turn, will not be often tempted to mingle with the unthinking crowd. When,
for

S E R M O N VIII.

9

for the sake of unbending the mind more entirely, and avoiding any unnecessary air of singularity, they do at any time join it; the same turn will contribute to preserve them from the seduction of vice and folly.

It is not to be denied, that from the head to the heart the distance, in a moral reckoning, is often immense; that between sublimity of idea and elevation of conduct there is no necessary connexion; that the finest sentiments and the grossest passions have been observed to meet in the same mind; that our First Mother was betrayed by the pride of knowing; and that the height of capacity in Lucifer, only increased the fall of that son of the morning. All this is true. But shall we hence infer, that the desire of knowledge well directed, and wisely applied, is not likely to produce any worthy impressions?

IMAGINE two young ladies, of whom one delights in elegant and virtuous studies, the other in fashionable idleness. Will you say, that the former is equally in danger with the latter of descending to vulgar, or to vicious pleasures? As familiarity with persons of refined manners may be expected to communicate a corresponding refinement; is it not probable, that intimacy with the most beautiful compositions will, in the same way, impart a beauty to the soul? And is there not ground to believe,

10 S E R M O N VIII.

that this will make her who is possessed of it, ashamed to allow herself in any thing unhand-some ; even as it is reasonable to suppose, that she who has been genteelly bred, will disdain the thought of a low behaviour ? Or, because the natural tendency of things is sometimes crossed, will you say it is therefore destroyed ? Have you not heard, that a rule is not overthrown, but rather confirmed by exceptions ? Young people, we know, are often corrupted by bad books ; and have we not likewise known them improved by good ones ? She must be depraved and sunk indeed, who from contemplating the majesty and happiness of Virtue in the best examples, together with the meanness and misery of Vice in the worst, that history or poetry holds up to view, can go away, and in her own deportment counteract immediately the feelings of love and admiration for the one, of contempt and abhorrence for the other, which objects of this kind must unavoidably awaken. She again, who should not perceive herself prompted to a prudent and amiable demeanour, or guarded against the contrary, by those pictures of discretion and excellence on one hand, of levity and futility on the other, with which sentimental and moral writers abound, must be absolutely void of decency, or of reflexion. To instance but in one subject more ; she must be wholly given up to trifles that can pursue them with the same fondness, after having her imagination raised,

S E R M O N VIII. 11

raised, and all her faculties expanded, by those wonderful representations of the works of God, which are contained in many books of Philosophy and Geography, Voyages and Travels.

BUT now represent to yourselves a young lady, whose understanding is utterly uncultivated. What is there to correct her passions, or to govern her practice? What is there to direct her choice of companions, and diversions; to guard her against the follies of her own sex, and the arts of ours; in short, to prevent her falling into any or every snare, that is, or may be laid for her? Suppose her to have received from Nature the seeds of common sense. Do these require no attention to raise them? or is this most useful plant to be reared without the aid of experience? But where, or how, is that to be obtained by a girl? Must she discover the wiles and wickedness of libertines by conversing with them? Must she learn how to defend against danger by having run into it; or how to avoid the blandishments of pleasure by having felt its bitterness? By men the knowledge of the world is commonly gathered in it. Very different from the situation of women is theirs in this respect; and they, it is to be apprehended, often purchase a little wisdom at a great expence. By entering into any company that tempts, engaging in any friendship, that offers, or accepting of almost
any

creature that happens to court them, it is but too well known what mischiefs a number of our young gentlemen incur. A female that acts upon the same plan is lost; and she who would effectually escape dishonour and remorse, reproach and ridicule, must endeavour to know the world from books, to collect experience from those who bought it, and to shun misconduct herself by observing the calamities it has occasioned to others. But I said,

SECONDLY, That Mental Acquisitions were of importance to your dignity and figure in life. Consider, my dear sisters, how many women are lessened, in a discerning eye, by their extravagant attachment to dress and toys, to equipage and ostentation; in a word, to all the gaudy apparatus of female vanity, together with the endlessly ridiculous, no less than frequently fatal consequences, which these draw after them. Consider how trite and childish, sensible men must necessarily deem those arts, that are daily practised on our sex by multitudes of yours; not to speak now of worse enticements. Consider the emptiness, insipidity, and inelegance of their conversation—how contemptible! Above all the rest, consider the jealousy and envy, the mean suspicion and shameful malignity, to which we have seen the female breast enslaved, and frequently on the slightest foundation, frequently on no foundation at all—how debasing! Now from these

these evils the love of letters, with that liberal cast of thought which they are naturally calculated to give, would, I am well persuaded, be one powerful preservative.

A YOUNG woman so worthily, and so happily engaged, will not find leisure for unnecessary trifles and idle parade: or if it were possible she should, a conscious superiority will enable her very much to despise them. Endowed with her powers of pleasing, she will not find herself reduced to the little tricks played off by many of her sex. In the company of her friends, she must ever appear with peculiar advantage. In other companies, where she least thinks of appearing, an agreeable tincture of intelligence, an easy correctness of expression, if it is proper for her to take any part in the discourse, will still diffuse themselves. Perhaps too she will deliver herself, with a graceful, though modest freedom. Her letters, or any other composition that may fall from her pen, will be read with particular eagerness and approbation; her correspondence will be prized as an honour, and her acquaintance courted as a privilege; attention will hang upon her words, and respect follow in her train. Such a woman will know how to entertain, and charm, beyond the duration of an hour. Is it carrying our ideas too far to say, that, in all probability, an emanation of sentiment

sentiment and spirit will be visible in her air and manner, that her mind will radiate in her eyes? It may not always, but it will often. With regard to those vile passions before mentioned, which arise from rivalry in dress, beauty, and the like; as she has learnt to value herself on better things than the last, the first by consequence will not have the same hold of her soul; besides that I suppose her to have acquired an enlargement and generosity, which nothing but books, or knowledge of the world, or the principles of genuine piety, can inspire.

Of the two latter the operation is in some respects defective, without the concurrence of the former. How improving soever an acquaintance with life may be found on some accounts, there are instances, in which it will hurt the feelings of the heart, if these are not from time to time softened and cherished, by the more soothing representations of men and things given by authors of a candid strain. Then it is to be remembered, that, in matters of religion, a zeal without knowledge has been often destructive, and is always hurtful. But suppose no such zeal to take place; suppose that meekness, as it certainly ought, makes a part, and a large one too, of the pious character in any woman; yet without the seasonings of a good understanding, without something of
that

that salt and poignancy which are derived from writers of taste and learning, there will arise, in repeated intercourse, a sameness and a flatness that must diminish esteem, though they may not destroy affection. Add to this that, on a variety of subjects, ignorance will inevitably produce a poorness and vulgarity of thinking, which, to persons whose views are nobler, will be rather disgusting.

IN truth, the acquisitions we recommend would prevent or cure most of those little prejudices, and little passions, which often hurt the sex in the opinion of their best friends. Not to insist on what has been mentioned more than once, their astonishing prepossession in favour of public places, greatly owing to their want of something rational and agreeable to employ them at home; what shall we say of that absurd partiality, which they frequently shew for well dressed fops, who pretend indeed to admire them, but are too frivolous and conceited to admire any, in good earnest, but themselves? Surely a well informed understanding would enable women to despise such insignificance; and to give the preference to merit, and modesty, in a plain habit.

To what shall we chiefly impute that female curiosity, which has been so long, and in most instances, so justly a topic of satire? Is it

16 S E R M O N VIII.

it possible, that women could shew that amazing eagerness to be acquainted with every minute particular in the life, character, dress, fortune, and circumstances of others, did they possess a fund of domestic entertainment and liberal conversation? The original principle, by receiving a right direction, might certainly be turned into a rich source of improvement, that would spread encreasing lustre around you.

THAT aptness also to be astonished, alarmed, affrighted at trifling accidents, imaginary evils, or natural events ever so little unusual, which, when carried far, and frequently recurring, makes a young lady appear quite silly, is often the effect of shallowness. Ignorance is prone to admire; and admiration readily swells into a passion, or sinks into a panic: whereas an enlightened mind is seldom wrought up to ecstasy, and seldom overwhelmed by terror.

AGAIN, were women to contemplate the fatal consequences of avarice, ambition, vanity, luxury, the violence of love, and the fury of revenge, as appearing in the ruin of families, the devastation of provinces, and the fall of empires; is there not reason to hope, they would be less dazzled with those objects, and less affected by those occasions, that are apt to foment such propensities—propensities which, though
in

in their case not so consequential to others, are yet many times extremely degrading, as well as pernicious, to themselves.

AND then, that ignoble disposition to scandal, deemed by many one of the characteristic blemishes of your sex—you could not possibly indulge it so often, were you furnished with a sufficient compass of observation and sentiment, on subjects much more innocent, and surely not less interesting.—Not less interesting, did I say? How, in the name of God, are you concerned with the faults of those with whom you have no connexion? or what call have you to remark upon them, farther than may be necessary to guard yourselves or others against their contagion, or their consequences? Are you vain of the wit and vivacity which you display, or fancy you display on these occasions? Ah, what superior honour would candour, sweetness, and self-correction, reflect upon your characters! But those qualities are the offspring of self-knowledge, and a comprehension of what is truly beautiful and becoming in life. Let me persuade you, my beloved pupils, with all your improvements, “with all your gettings, to get” these two essential parts of “Understanding.” Benefits innumerable will result from them: this among the rest; they will prevent I know not what affectations, that daily expose many pretty fools of your sex.

BUT

BUT why be at so much pains? You are under no kind of apprehension on those points; confident that, wherever you appear, you cannot fail of commanding regard; sure that, whenever you are pleased to open those lips, which you have heard so frequently praised, every ear will be attentive, and every heart allured. Indeed? Are you very confident, very sure?—Take care you be not disappointed. It is my duty to tell you, whether you believe it or no, that I have known many a man, who, in the company of women, has applauded that which he inwardly despised; and with hypocritical rapture listened to nonsense, where the speaker was handsome. Obsequiousness and adulation will attend on youth and beauty. But can you be contented with an incense so cheap; an incense offered to a face or to a shape alone; an incense that does not rise from the altar of the heart; an incense, in fine, that is lavished, with an undistinguishing hand, on every insignificant image that happens to be cast in a regular mould, and coloured with a mixture of white and red? Where, alas! is your delicacy? Have you no ingenuous pride? Are you so very vain, (pride and vanity are different things) so very ignorant, after all the admonitions you have received, as still to construe flattery into approbation, and smiles into attachment? But I intreat you reflect. When beauty and youth are gone, and go they will—
what

what then? Why, then, all this adulation and obsequiousness will vanish with them; and if you are not adorned with attractions more substantial and durable, into what neglected things will you sink!

AN Accomplished Woman can never become an object of neglect: she must always remain an object of distinction amongst her acquaintance. When she was young, she might please more; but as even then she pleased chiefly by her mind, she will therefore continue to please still. The discerning Few at least will discover in her, beauties which neither the inroads of age, nor the ravage of sickness, can deface. When “declined into the vale of years,” she will still, from the superiority of her character, stand forth an exalted figure. Sense and capacity, joined to worth and sweetness, are exempted from the condition of all things else; which is to lose their influence, when they lose their novelty. “The ornament of grace which Wisdom will give to thy head,” will not appear with less real lustre, when infirmity shall cause that head to shake. “The crown of glory which she shall deliver to thee,” will in Reason’s eye receive new dignity from grey hairs: or rather, according to our inspired author, those “grey hairs are” themselves “a crown of glory, being found in the way of righteousness.”

Do

Do you know a woman far advanced in life, but yet farther in virtue and understanding, who with mild insinuation employs them to render wise and happy those about her, especially the young; who for such in particular makes every kind allowance, not forgetting those early days, when she too stood in need of indulgence; who, when her health will permit, takes pleasure in seeing herself surrounded by a circle of youth innocently gay, condescending even to mix in their little sports, and by a graceful complacency of look, and pleasing remainder of antient humour, to encourage and promote their harmless amusement.— Do you know such a woman? Then speak your opinion freely. Will this youthful circle be in any danger of despising her, because she is old? On the contrary, will they not contend with one another, who shall pay her most veneration, who shall stand highest in her affection? Can you conceive a character more respectable, and at the same time more amiable? What is there good or excellent, to which she will not have it in her power to win them?

AND now think of a decayed beauty, who in the height of her bloom, and the career of her conquests, trusted solely to that bloom, and never dreamt of securing those conquests, such as they were, by any thing more solid and abiding. Inexpressibly mortified that both are

at

at an end, she would fain, if possible, keep up the appearance of them still.—How? By a constrained vivacity, by a juvenile dress, by that affectation of allurements and importance, which we so readily pardon to the prime of life, but which in its decline is universally condemned as awkward and unnatural. Place her in the young assembly we have just supposed. There let her endeavour to sparkle, as in the days of old; there let her lay traps for admiration amidst the wrinkles of age.—How ludicrous, and how melancholy at the same moment! What girl, or what boy of them all, will not be struck with the impropriety? Every mark of decay, every symptom of change, will be traced and examined with acuteness. No part of her figure will be overlooked, not a single slip in her behaviour forgiven: whereas, if warned by the effects of time, she prudently gave up to her juniors all competition of looks and shew, and studied only to make herself agreeable by her conversation and manners; there is scarcely one of those little critics that would ever reflect upon her years, or that would not be delighted with her good sense, and obliging deportment.—No, my young friends, nothing can save you from contempt at that period, if during this you are not at pains to improve your minds. She who is, shall in one sense, and that the best, be always young.

IF she continues single, and her situation, or her choice, should lead her to cultivate but few acquaintance, amongst them she must be ever loved and valued. If she is married, and to a man of tolerable judgment, with tolerable temper, he will count himself happy in such an associate; he will even be proud of those talents in her which do honour to his election. I have ever remarked, that women of capacity and elegance have possessed the hearts of their husbands in a degree which is not common; I mean, where those husbands had any worth or discernment. You will easily imagine, that I suppose the women in question too wise, and too excellent, to affect superiority; or not to give their partners all the credit and consequence possible, on every occasion. Between men and women there is seldom any rivalry in what relates merely to intellect; nor are the former ever much hurt by any conscious inferiority in that respect, where the latter do not shew themselves, especially before company, arrogant or pretending.

I MUST not forget to subjoin how much the Mental Improvements, now enforced, will contribute to adorn and animate the companion, to direct and dignify the mistress, to accomplish the mother and the friend, to spread a charm over the whole matrimonial state, and to relieve those duller hours that are apt to
steal

steal on the most delightful condition of humanity.

NOR can I dismiss this part of the argument, without mentioning what has often appeared to me one very remarkable instance, amongst many that history records, of the transcendent power to captivate and preserve esteem, which Intellectual Accomplishments, worthily exerted, confer upon a woman. It is that of Madam Maintenon, the celebrated favourite and wife of Lewis the Fourteenth.

THIS monarch, born with strong propensities to pleasure, bred in its very lap, indulged from the beginning in all his passions, early possessed of unlimited power, constantly accustomed to the most exquisite flattery, formerly drunk with success and glory, always courted by the female sex with every art that beauty, wit, or ambition could employ, in his intercourse with them still addicted to novelty and change—this very monarch, not yet arrived at the age of fifty, in full health, environed with all the splendor of a most brilliant court, read in little else besides comedies and novels, finds in the conversation of that lady, whose origin was not high, whose fortune had been always low, and who was now older than himself by several years—finds, I say, in her conversation such innocence, such sweetness, such

such unequalled charms of taste and intelligence, as induced him to break off every engagement of a voluptuous kind, and to enter with her into the most honourable of all connexions, in which he appears to have maintained his fidelity to the last. Madam Maintenon had from her youth improved herself by reading, and the best company, whom her beauty and talents drew about her, in a country where the society of the women is much more regarded than in this. Lewis was first attracted by the extraordinary spirit and elegance of her letters; and then absolutely fixed by her sentiments, her attention, and her submission. These were a balm to his soul, tormented by domestic, personal, and political chagrins. In these he obtained a relief from that weariness and wretchedness, which the pomps and pleasures of the world had served only to increase, while they promised to prevent or cure them. We do not find, that this illustrious lady was fond of fashionable diversions: her books and her work were the principal amusements of her leisure.

BUT it is time to proceed to our last point, namely, the usefulness of Mental Acquisitions to your comfort and felicity. It is worthy your observation, that the Most High, having formed his rational offspring for a happiness more refined and noble than the indulgence

gence of the senses alone, has wisely made the gratifications arising from thence in a great measure momentary. To prolong these inferior enjoyments, is the laborious task of the slaves of appetite and fancy in league with each other. But as it is undertaken in opposition to the design of the Almighty, and prosecuted in defiance of his laws, it must ever be vain. They only fatigue themselves in the attempt. From efforts beyond her scope and powers, Nature will always recoil. Satiated with external pleasures, she turns inward. Experiencing there a void, which the whole system of matter cannot fill, she is prompted by an innate ambition to aspire after higher objects. Her spiritual faculties, and divine extraction, point her to the world of ideas. From hence, and from what may be called the Commerce of Minds, she wishes to derive her chief satisfaction. But you will easily conceive, that such commerce cannot be carried on to any extent, nor with any variety, without a competent store of the goods proper to it; those, I mean, which experience and reflexion, genius and reasoning, discourse and memory, have accumulated and laid up in the writings of different ages, as in so many convenient repositories, for the use of all who are willing to avail themselves of this better wealth. Those who are not, must necessarily labour under much internal poverty. Ac-

26 S E R M O N VIII.

cordingly, how do they strain to supply the needful demands of conversation, when in company; and when alone, how do they struggle to elude, because they cannot content, the cravings of the immortal mind? To the want of this provision, and the incapacity of sustaining the weight of their own spirits pressing upon them in solitude, must we not principally impute their impatience for all manner of entertainments, that may help to fill up the painful blanks of time, without any considerable expence of that which they can least afford—thought? But this expedient is merely temporary, and extremely imperfect. Diversion long continued is drudgery; and still the soul falls back upon herself.

Now, if in the intervals of leisure you can with relish repair to books, you need never be at a loss. You may happily avoid, if you will, the toils of restless amusement, and the sighs of immoderate mirth. Excuse this last expression. Have you not sometimes proved the truth of Solomon's remark, that "even in laughter the heart is sorrowful." Have you not now and then perceived a sigh to steal from you, when oppressed and exhausted by frequent bursts of merriment?—If she who is in love with reading should, on particular occasions, be led into scenes of that kind, with what redoubled ardour will she return to silence

lence and study ! From the noise, bustle, and barrenness of modern conversation, with what exalted pleasure will she betake herself to the society of the celebrated dead, or of admired authors yet alive, where all is still, serene, and delightful ! After being disgusted with the nauseous, or the meagre diet, served up in most companies, where low scandal, or mere town-talk, supply the place of urbanity and sense ; how rich and regaling will she find that repast, which her library is always ready to furnish !

THERE she will not fail of meeting with food of every different flavour, whether of a lighter or more solid substance, agreeable to her present inclination ; at the same time that nothing is forced upon her, and she is left at liberty, not only to vary the entertainment as often, and as much as she pleases, but also to rise from it whenever she will. Historians, Philosophers, Orators, and Poets, the best writers of every class, within her compass, are ever apt to gratify without constraint or ceremony her intellectual taste. Nor will they take offence at any preference, which at any time she may be disposed to make. She can never intrude upon them at any improper season, nor appear to leave them with abruptness : and when she does leave them, instead of room for uneasy retrospect, the manner in which

28 S E R M O N VIII.

she has been employed will be productive of self-approbation. She will feel her soul nourished and strengthened, her spirits cheared and elevated, or collected and composed. The duties of life she will go about with fresh resolution, and a quicker comprehension of what becomes her. To congenial minds her attachment will be increased. With them she will enjoy, as often as she has opportunity, sentimental and friendly delight, the circulation of thought, the reciprocation of confidence,

“ The feast of reason, and the flow of soul.”

And these, my friends, are satisfactions which depend not on youth, nor on the advantages peculiar to it : satisfactions which, in some respects at least, will grow with your growing years ; and which in every case, will survive the transient flower of beauty. Let me again remind you of the period of its decay. Of that period you cannot be reminded too often.

WHEN it arrives, those hollow-hearted men, that for their own ends now swarm around you with every semblance of love or admiration, will disperse like flies at the approach of winter. In a little time they will forget you, as if you had never been ; or remember you only

to

to say to every one they meet, how much you are altered. But what words can paint the desolation of her, who finds herself thus forsaken and despised, without any resource in her own breast?

I THINK I see her flying to her glass, day after day, to observe whether that flatterer will prove more constant. At first she is astonished, she is shocked, at the stupidity of those men, who can become insensible to a face or a form like hers? But in a little time that once soothing glass, which was wont to transport her with the reflected image of herself, begins to withdraw its flatteries too. She is alarmed and depressed. She seeks consolation from some low dependant, who with a grave face and glozing accent, assures her she is handsomer than ever, while the mercenary wretch secretly laughs her to scorn. Every artifice of dress, all the seduction of ornament, is studied and practised with more exquisite solicitude. She views herself on every side: the waste seems repaired. Her spirits rise; she is overjoyed. With renewed expectation she sallies forth: she dances her usual round: some one in pity tells her how well she looks: the evening is passed in triumph. She returns home exhausted with the flutter. Next morning the mirror is consulted again. She is pale, sickly; her eyes are sunk; the wrinkles appear—more than ever. Again she

is startled, terrified, falls into a rage. The storm bursts on her domestics, spends itself, subsides. The usual methods are tortured to make her up; and if some new expedient is suggested, that can better disguise nature, and deceive the beholder—what a discovery! Thus between the vicissitudes of hope and fear, of exultation and despondence, on a subject to her weak unfurnished mind the most interesting of all others, she is miserably tossed; till by such repeated and violent perturbation, conspiring with the addition of years, she is consigned over to despair, the heart-overwhelming despair, of being ever praised more for those unhappy charms, which she at length perceives are beyond recovery lost.—What young woman of reflection would not prevent such ridiculous distress? But can you think of any way to prevent it, so efficacious, as the turning betimes your principal attention to your better part? That even in this way you shall become wholly indifferent, about the decline of an appearance which used to give your friends as well as yourselves pleasure, I will not affirm. But if so high a strain of philosophy be hardly practicable, still however I think you must acknowledge, that the advances of age will be supported much the more easily for such preparation. In the mean while, how many vexations, that harass and distract the
greater

S E R M O N VIII. 31

greater part of your sex, will be thus obviated by you !

IN truth, most of the grievances complained of by mortals are self-created. They proceed from that fondness of fancy, which gives consequence to trifles, or from those gusts of passion, which produce agitation without cause. But next to the power of religion, can you imagine any means of avoiding both so probable, as the wise and calm pursuits to which I would now persuade you ? Permit me, my much loved hearers, to succeed. Defer not, by the cultivation of your minds, as well as hearts, to lay in a store of enjoyment and comfort, such as you can repair to in secret, when all abroad is unfolacing and insipid.

EVERY thing external is hastening to change and dissolution. You yourselves are gliding insensibly down the current of time. Can you bear the thought of resigning your passage to eternity, a passage as important as it is short ; of resigning it, I say, to the blind impulse of chance, caprice, and ignorance ? Or suppose you are so far careful of consequences, as to secure a safe arrival ; can you, like illiterate and incurious mariners, sailing by some beautiful coast, be satisfied to hurry along, without attending to the various prospects and numerous objects, which Nature and Art have spread out before

C 4

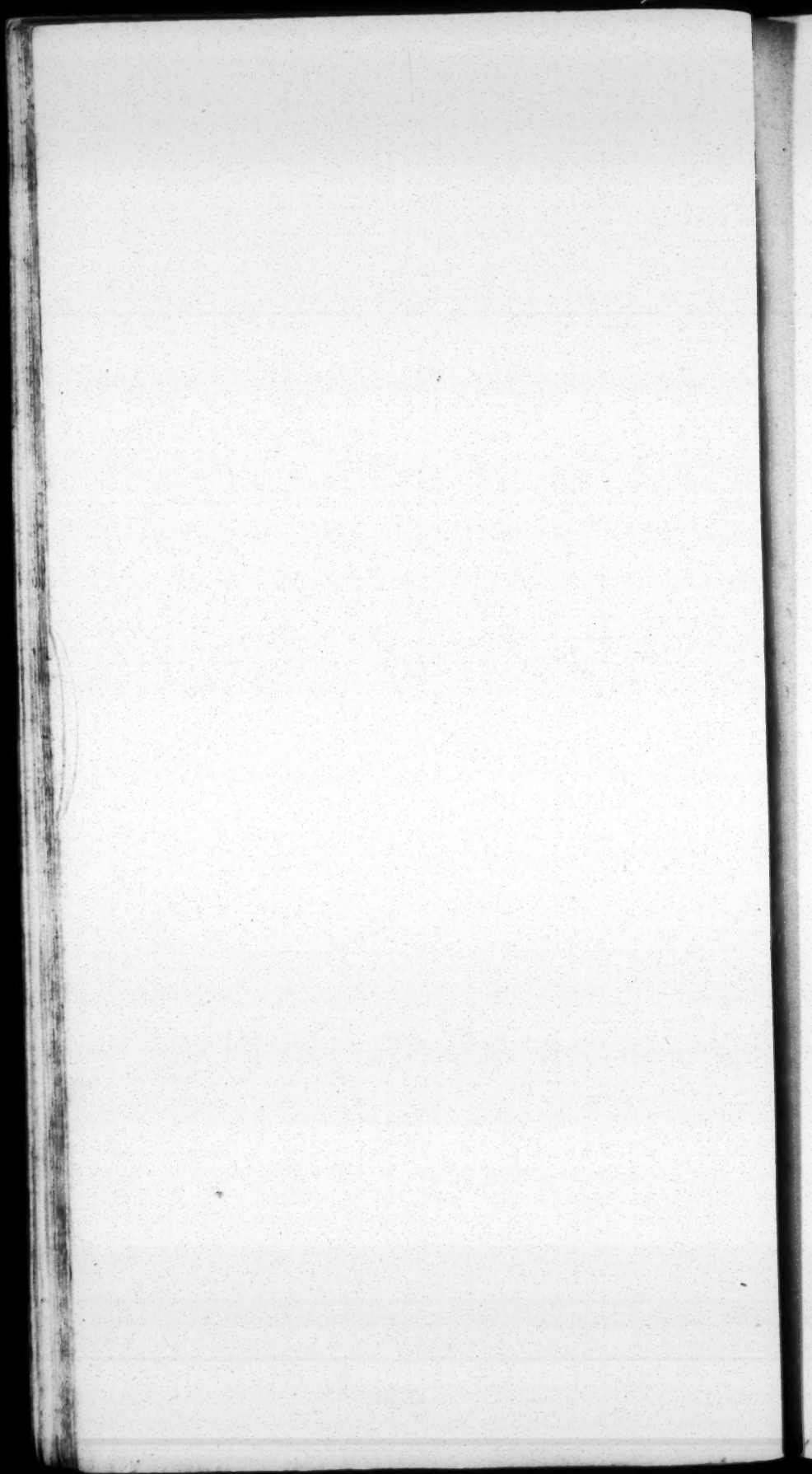
you ;

you; or without taking advantage of the best assistance you can find on your voyage, to improve in whatever is instructive, or ornamental, and praise-worthy? Have you forgotten, that, when landed on the blissful shore, your felicity will bear no inconsiderable proportion to your present attainments in knowledge; that the most enlarged understandings, where the dispositions have been of a piece, will be rewarded by the noblest discoveries; in short, that they who shine now with the fairest lights of wisdom shall, like the more distinguished stars of Heaven, be crowned hereafter with superior splendor?

S E R M O N IX.

O N

F E M A L E P I E T Y.



S E R M O N IX.

On Female Piety.

I Tim. ii. 10.

—Which becometh women professing Godliness.

P R O V. xxxi. 30.

Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, She shall be praised.

THE frailty of women has been often a topic of triumphant declamation. On this subject much unkind wit has been displayed; and many a dull sarcasm is daily added, and widely circulated, with an air of conscious satisfaction. Hardly can one go into a company of men, where licentiousness of tongue passes for freedom of conversation, without hearing the poor women abused for their worthlessness, or weakness, or both. But supposing them particularly frail, is it noble to exult over them on that account, and in their absence too, when they have not an opportunity of defending themselves? Should not the strong rather pity and support the weak? Yet after all, how does it appear that any singular strength of resolution belongs to our sex, or
that

that yours stand chargeable with peculiar infirmity?

THE loss of virtue is, no doubt, frequently followed with extreme depravity in women. But is not the same thing to be seen amongst men; though it is not remarked with the same attention, or censured with equal rigour? If many unhappy females do indeed run into such “excess of riot, and superfluity of naughtiness,” as seem to justify the observation, that there is nothing so profligate as a vicious woman; may it not be imputed to their being driven almost to a state of despair? Forsaken as they are by the wretches that ruined them, abandoned by their relations, if any they have, commonly dreading the scorn of their own sex, and frequently too little considered by the virtuous part of ours; what can be expected, in general, from creatures who have put off the modesty of nature, and are propelled by evil habits, co-operating often with base associates, and bitter poverty?—Do I then plead the cause of vice? God forbid. But I cannot abide that want of candour, which would aggravate the guilt and misery of beings, who to us should be objects of so much compassion; I say to Us, of whom many are the first authors of this very guilt and misery, while the rest are all likewise subject to go astray.

I SHALL

I SHALL probably be asked here, Does not the Apostle Peter expressly style the woman the weaker vessel? He does; but in the same sense that those vessels are so styled, which being of finer materials, or more delicate construction, and therefore easily broken or hurt, are, for that reason, and for the regard also which people have for them, used with particular tenderness. That this is his meaning is manifest from the passage referred to, where he says, "Give honour unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel." Why honour on that score, if the epithet Weaker is not to be understood as I have now, according to the best interpreters, explained it?

BUT does not St. Paul, some verses after the text from Timothy, observe, that "Adam was not deceived, but the Woman being deceived was in the transgression?" True: it does appear from the history, that "the serpent," as our Apostle says elsewhere, "beguiled Eve through his subtilty;" and that the man, though aware of the deceit, was, by his fondness for his deluded yet still lovely partner, drawn into the same transgression. But what was it that exposed the woman to that snare by which she was seduced? Passions, I will own, exceedingly culpable in their nature, and fatal in their consequences; but not the passions for which her daughters

daughters have been indiscriminately blamed. In reality, the resolute spirit and persevering vigilance, with which a great number of women preserve their honour, while so few men in comparison are restrained by the laws of continence, seem to me no slight proof that the former possess a degree of fortitude well worthy of praise.

BUT what is all this to the purpose of our present meditation? Much every way. I meant it as my first argument in behalf of Female Piety; and on what footing it stands I will proceed to shew, after remarking that the persons to whom our text from St. Paul is addressed, are by him supposed to profess a respect for religion,—“As becometh women “professing Godliness:” a supposition we are willing to make in your favour, my beloved hearers; so far, I mean, as to render it unnecessary to inculcate that profession from those general notions of truth and duty, which, with a few exceptions, I do hope you readily acknowledge. Instead of this, our reasoning and exhortations will turn chiefly on such principles and facts as relate more immediately to your sex, situation, and time of life, considered in conjunction with the character and manners of the age.

AND now for the argument already suggested, you will be more sensible of its force by attending

attending to the following observations; That the firmness, with which so many of you guard your virtue, being transferred to the practice of Piety at large, will, by God's assistance, contribute to render it easy and delightful; that the considerations of Religion will, in their turn, support and cheer you under the restraints of conscience and decorum; that you will hence derive the mighty satisfaction the Divine Approbation amidst the censures of the uncharitable, and the Divine Protection against the machinations of the ungodly; and, in the last place, that the injustice, unkindness, and treachery of the world, should engage you to greater Prudence, Purity, and Devotion.

As to the first, it is certain that the practice of real Piety requires no small resolution and perseverance. Is it not likewise certain that in what concerns their reputation, many young women possess a large share of these? Let them but apply this to the discharge of their duty as Christians, and the happiest effects will ensue; uniformity, facility, and joy in religion. What cannot courage and constancy achieve? In the point to which I allude, you indeed are often heroines. Your life is a series of self-denial. But self-denial from right principles is the perfection of Christianity. Do but act on these principles throughout,

throughout, and you shall one day walk in white with your Saviour: he will confess your names as worthy before his Father and before his angels: you shall follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, singing to your golden harps a new song, expressive of signal triumph and praise.

It has been said of women, and I believe with truth, that they are remarkably steady to their purpose. Let it be seen that you are so in what is good. And “let not your good be evil spoken of,” on account of any thing upon your part that might give ground to suspect you controul your passions in one way only, and that too from no higher principle than the fear of shame. By a noble command of yourselves in other points, wherein this consideration cannot be supposed to operate so strongly, make it appear that you are governed by religious as well as by prudential motives.

WE would not lessen the influence of any one wise, or useful consideration, from the side of this world: but we wish your minds to lie more open to the efficacy of the next. So far indeed as mere reputation goes, it may be much the same to a woman, whether the regularity of her conduct is the result of pious or of political maxims. But in the sight of God, and at the bar of conscience, how vast the

the difference! In that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, what will it avail you, if the decency of your behaviour should be found to have proceeded from no nobler spring than the desire of saving appearances? Who can express the horror of a female hypocrite at that all-revealing period, when stripped of every disguise, she shall be pointed out to the congregated universe as an infamous creature, whose soul was enslaved to sensuality, at the very time that she affected the strictest virtue, treated indiscretion in others with the severity due to vice alone, had no allowances to make for human frailty, and, with supercilious disdain, looked down on many of her sex not half so wicked as herself?

LET it be carefully remembered, that as, in what regards outward trials, the Gospel is literally the doctrine of the Cross; so, with respect to inward conflicts, it is properly the discipline of the passions. Here, in truth, the religion of a Christian must begin and end. What pity, my honoured pupils, if you, who have that amazing power over the exterior of your deportment, if you, who offer to a spotless name those continual sacrifices which your greatest enemies cannot deny, should after all lose the reward of undisssembled sanctity, by being excluded from that vision of God,
which

which Jesus has promised to the pure in heart ! What pity, in the mean while, that such power is not more generally allowed to exert itself on the ample theatre of a truly virtuous life ; and that such sacrifices should not, by the consolations of devotion be sweetened, consecrated, and turned into so many sources of sublime enjoyment !

BUT this reminds me of having likewise said, that the considerations of Religion will conduce mightily to support and chear you under the restraints of sobriety and decorum. In proportion as these considerations are made more familiar, will these restraints become less painful, till at length they in a manner change their nature, and seem like silken bands, that even while they confine you, are no less easy than ornamental.

BETWEEN all other philosophy and the philosophy of Jesus, one glorious distinction is this ; that the latter not only displays a higher standard of moral excellence, but also communicates superior powers of virtuous action. To the fainter conclusions of Reason it superadds the bright discoveries of Faith. The future world, with the great transactions of the supreme administration, which are introductory to it, are there unveiled. There the vanity, and withal the importance of the present state,

is

is unfolded. There divine pardon and eternal life, as “the gift of God thro’ Jesus Christ,” are ensured and ascertained to obedient believers. The history of the Redeemer is there exhibited with all the beauty of simplicity, and energy of truth: a history, my dear hearers, equally important to all that read it, and to those that read it with a serious unprejudiced disposition, unspeakably affecting; a history which involves the most extensive and lasting interests of human nature, and to such as view it in that light, carries with it, beyond all other writings, a vital, home-felt, and heart-awakening influence. The ingenuous breast, inflamed by the friendship, and penetrated by the spirit of Jesus, burns with the love of virtue, and heaves with the hope of salvation. Jesus is the pattern of virtue: gratitude is one of its worthiest incentives; and faith, which is the fundamental principle of the whole system, faith in the mercy and acceptance of the Universal Father, through the mediation of his meritorious Son, by whom he is carrying on a scheme of grace, that comprehends all sincere penitents of whatever name or nation, throughout all successive ages—this Faith, I say, imparts to feeble and desponding creatures a strength and encouragement that no other system could ever inspire.

NOR are these ideas beyond the ordinary reach of female understanding. They depend
not

not on a nice chain of reasoning, nor on the abstruse researches of science. How much sooner they may have been disguised by the dreams of the schools, to conceive them as they are set forth in scripture, masculine intellects are by no means necessary. Connected with Facts, the most astonishing to the imagination, and Sentiments the most touching to the heart, they seem to lie particularly level to the better characters of your sex. In short, to feel their tendency, and experience their operation, a modest, susceptible, and affectionate mind is chiefly required.

PERMIT me to ask you, as in the presence of God, do you in good earnest believe in the Holy Ghost, in the catholic church, in the communion of saints, in the forgiveness of sins, in the resurrection of the body, in the life everlasting, in Him who is the resurrection and the life, the all-sufficient sacrifice, the all-prevailing advocate, the meek, the lowly, and the loving master, as well as the awful and impartial judge? Do you often by devout contemplation realize these, and the other wonderful objects of Christianity, together with the grand principles of Natural Religion? To both do you frequently join the heaven-moving force of fervent prayer, the powerfully combined influences of public worship, and the sweetly supporting communications of holy friendship? Then say, whether you can ever

be

be at a loss for motives to animate, or for aids to second your endeavours after wisdom and virtue? Surely no.

WISDOM and Virtue are beautiful forms, and for their own intrinsic worth unquestionably entitled to all possible love and veneration. But little acquainted with the human heart are they, who would build the morals of mankind on this single basis. Decency of character, dignity of conduct, the honours due to temperance, integrity, benevolence, magnanimity, and the like, are ideas as solid as they are refined, and which ought certainly to be cherished by all who are capable of comprehending their moment. To offer to depreciate them is vile, and not more repugnant to reason than to scripture, where the beauties of holiness are expressly named, and “ whatsoever things are venerable, lovely, “ and of good report,” are, as mentioned in a former discourse, recommended in so many words. But yet, on the other hand, considering the passions, disorders, and debility of beings, situated as we are; to trust the cause of righteousness and truth to the sole strength of such arguments—what is it, but hazarding the most valuable interests in the world on a bottom utterly unequal to so precious a freight?

A FEW

A FEW select spirits, more liberal and elevated than usual, may, in their progress towards perfection, derive some extraordinary assistances from those sublimer speculations; at least when not under very difficult or delicate circumstances of temptation. But what, think ye, would become even of them; much more, what would become of the far greater part, when immediately under such circumstances, did not Religion step in to their aid with her more forcible and striking sanctions, founded on their hopes and fears of futurity, as these are connected with a sense of the Almighty's inspection, and a faith in the illustrious facts of revelation? How little in general were the philosophers of antiquity themselves influenced by the system in question, with whatever pomp they professed, or with whatever eloquence they displayed it! Some of them indeed were men of great virtues, as well as great conceptions; while the rest were striking examples, how much easier it is to talk than to act well, and that to reform the world there is wanted a diviner power than reason alone.

WITH regard to the case now before us, it may be observed, that those young persons, who have had the misfortune to be in a great measure left to the common notices of nature, go astray much more frequently, than others

on

on whom the principles of Piety have been early and judiciously impressed.

WHEN I say Judiciously impressed, I mean to insinuate, that many hopeful children have been lost, through the imprudent efforts of their well meaning, but ill informed parents, to make them good by severe confinement and constant admonition. Those children alone will be truly good, and are likely to continue so, who are at once enamoured of their duty, awed by their Maker, and devoted to the securing of that "life and immortality which
" are brought to light through the Gospel."

HERE I cannot help recollecting a most memorable instance, wherein a much celebrated youth was guarded against the indulgence of appetite by the power of religion. I speak of Joseph, when tempted by the wife of Potiphar. Consider the complicated snare that was laid for his innocence; probably the blandishments of beauty; certainly the repeated, pressing, and passionate solicitations of an artful woman, of his mistress, who if she pleased could easily procure his farther advancement; the opportunities of privacy; the prospect of close concealment; his time of life; his plentiful condition; those warm affections, that strong sensibility, which the sequel of his story shews to have been natural to
him;

him; the extreme danger manifestly attending his refusal, I mean, all the mischiefs to be dreaded from the resentment and violence of a proud but fond female resisted, disappointed, enraged, who would not fail, however falsely, to represent the unbounded confidence of a generous master abused; and finally, those mischiefs falling at one blow upon a dependant and a stranger, whose prosperity in that family had no doubt rendered him the object of envy to some, and whose protestations in his own favour would never be believed by others to the disadvantage of a woman of her rank and fortune.—Such was the snare. And what was it that enabled our amiable hero to conquer it? The history will inform you. “He refused, and said unto
“his master’s wife, Behold, my master
“wotteth not what is with me in the house,
“and he hath committed all that he hath
“to my hand. There is none greater in
“this house than I; neither hath he kept
“back any thing from me but thee, because
“thou art his wife: how then can I do this
“great wickedness, and sin against God?”—
Excellent young man! From a crime, to which so many allurements concurred to incite him, he starts back with horror; so strongly are his natural feelings of gratitude and probity seconded by a reverence for the Omniscient.—“How can I do this great evil,
“and sin against God?”—No, my sisters,
there

there is not in this world such a preservative from vice as the fear of God. Temptations, by which human resolutions alone have been frequently foiled, are often overcome by the same resolutions when enforced by religious faith.

FROM these remarks you will plainly perceive, that what we wish for you is not a victory over your passions hardly gained, and at the expence of your tranquillity ; but a sacred self-possession, a certain diviner controul of your own wills, that shall distinguish you in the sight of him who “ desireth truth “ in the inward parts.” A sentiment that seems conformable to the best conceptions in nature ; since we find that the power which, according to the pagan creed, represented both Wisdom and Fortitude, was supposed to be of your sex. On the same principles does the wisest of men speak so often of the former in the feminine gender. Thus at least did ancient genius treat the women with respect. It is indeed observable that of republican states, where that genius commonly appeared most eminent, the sage legislators prescribed to females a particular gravity and simplicity of manners ; so different were their ideas of what was becoming from those of modern times !

BUT I added farther that, from the study of inward purity, as well as outward decorum, even that purity which the gospel so peculiarly enforces, you will reap the mighty satisfaction of the Divine Approbation amidst the censures of the uncharitable, and the Divine Protection against the machinations of the ungodly. Hard enough, it must be owned, is the case of women, as to the general reflexions made on their deportment. If they behave with reserve, they are pronounced prudish; if with frankness, bold; if with that just temperament of both which is the proper medium, capricious and uncertain. What shall they do? What can they do, but hold the middle way, with that attention to the rules of caution on one side, and of affability on the other, which times, places, and persons seem to require, “committing their cause to him that judgeth righteously,” and trusting for their safety to him that never forsakes the virtuous?

SUCH a respect for human judgment, as avoids giving occasion of censure, is undoubtedly right in every individual of society; of your sex especially, whose reputation is of so nice a contexture. But while for this purpose a Christian Woman pursues, as nearly as she can, the paths of prudence; what internal serenity

renity does she enjoy, by following, at the same time, the direction of principle, that highest and happiest guide of life! To say the truth, there may be situations, wherein the latter appears to be left the sole guide; so impossible is it for the former to find a way through the labyrinth. In this case, you can have but one reasonable care; which is, to do what conscience charges as your duty. In every case, that must be your principal care. In making it so, there will be this great advantage amongst many others, that you will every day grow less anxious about any thing else. The ease of mind, the gaiety of heart resulting from such a conduct, are not to be expressed.

If the world approves, it is well. The approbation of the best people, at least, will give you real pleasure; and the best people are naturally candid. If the world should condemn, and even the candid Few, which is by no means impossible, should be led by misrepresentation, or by mistake, to join in the sentence; still however you will have the comfort of not having deserved it. And from this inferior tribunal you will have the felicity of appealing to that which is supreme and infallible, with the humble assurance of being justified there through the powerful interposition of an advocate, whom no passion or mis-

apprehension can ever bias. At the same time you will have the consolation to hope, that sooner or later he in whom you trust “ will “ bring forth your righteousness as the light, “ and your judgment as the noon-day.” Seldom or ever, I think, does a persevering virtue fail of breaking out with fresh beauty, and augmented lustre, from those clouds with which calumny may have obscured it; even as the vernal sun by pursuing his career, shines forth at last with a kind of victorious splendor, that dispels the remaining damps of winter, delights the eye, and inspires the heart of every beholder.

BUT suppose the worst, that the erroneous multitude should continue to load you with unmerited reproach; I am not afraid to say that you are happy still, if you know how to avail yourselves of the supports of religion, particularly a sense of the Almighty’s Approbation. What indeed ought to discourage her who can triumph in this, and in that which is immediately connected with it, an assurance of the Almighty’s Protection?

NOTHING can be more certain than that your sex is, on every account, entitled to the shelter of ours. Your softness, weakness, timidity, and tender reliance on man; your helpless condition in yourselves, and his superior strength

strength for labour, ability for defence, and fortitude in trial; your tacit acknowledgment of these, and frequent application for his aid in so many winning ways, concur to form a plea, which nothing can disallow or withstand but brutality. Appetite indeed is naturally brutal. Untamed by religion, unchained by reason, what havock does it not commit? Nothing can be more wild or ferocious than lawless desire. How often, alas, does it disfigure and degrade minds, otherwise adorned with very valuable qualities! Have we not seen men, who in a sober mood were open to the tenderest feelings of humanity, incapable of any thing unjust or dishonourable, calm, and pliant to good advice; who yet, in the rebellion of their blood, were as ungovernable and fierce as any beast of the forest, broke through all restraint, and, to gratify the passion that impelled them, rushed on crimes utterly repugnant to the best sentiments of their own hearts!—Need I tell you, that from such men your virtue is in danger, and by so much the more by how much the qualities just named are, when allowed to operate, particularly engaging? But the fact is that, being inlaid in the constitution, they do operate frequently, and never perhaps more than immediately after those unhappy deviations, for which something within whispers the necessity of making every possible atonement. It is in

this way that those good-natured, but unhappy men keep themselves and one another in countenance, and often steal into your affection. Yet are these by no means the worst enemies of womankind.

IT is your smooth, cool, complimentary libertines, who have steeled their breasts by a system, whom the boasted principles, or rather no-principles of infidelity, have raised to a glorious contempt of all laws human and divine, delivered from the vulgar conceit of immortality, and enabled to conquer the little weaknesses of nature, with the ignoble prejudices of education, which happened to be on the side of justice, honour, sympathy;—it is such men, my fair ones, such flagitious and obdurate wretches, whose wiles, should you chance to be thrown in their way, you have most reason to dread. And believe me, they abound every where. From you indeed they will carefully conceal the enormity of their characters, and the blackness of their opinions; till by gaining your confidence they can insinuate the last with advantage, so as to take off your apprehensions of the first, and to blunt the edge of your resolutions. A sense of piety, the love of virtue, a regard to reputation, the fear of consequences, every principle borrowed from this world and the next, they are well aware would be alarmed and excited, were they to disclose

disclose their designs, or explain their ideas at once, without preparation or preface.— But I will not attempt to unfold the mystery of iniquity, in which they wrap themselves, and work unsuspected. Let it remain involved in its native darkness and horror; which cannot however hide it from the eye of Heaven, whose hottest vengeance shall one day overtake and blast it.

YOUR safety, I said before, lies in retreat and vigilance, in sobriety and prudence, in virtuous friendship, and rational conversation, in domestic, elegant, and Intellectual Accomplishments: I add now, in the Guardianship of Omnipotence, as that which must give efficacy to all the rest; but which can only be obtained by something more and better than them all, I mean, True Religion. What reason indeed have you to hope for a privilege so great, if you do not ask it? What cause could you have to complain, if your righteous Creator, on whom every consideration ought to teach your dependance, were to leave you to yourselves amidst those dangerous attacks, or artful snares, which you presumptuously imagine you could resist by your own strength, or elude by your caution? That humility which does not depress, as Christian humility never can, is the best means of security. She who is most sensible of her hazard, is most

likely to be on her guard. She who perceives her own imbecility, will be glad to invoke a higher power. Nor will the Parent of all be deaf to one of his reasonable offspring, who, apprehensive of the difficulties to which her frame and situation expose her, heartily implores his help.

VAIN very often is the help of man, even when afforded in its utmost extent. What shall we say then, when it is not only not afforded, but when he who ought to protect is bent to destroy? To whom shall young creatures of your sex, little lambs, innocent, gentle, fearful, undefended, beset by ravenous lions, or “by wolves in sheeps cloathing;”—to whom shall they fly, but to the Shepherd of Israel? And will he, think ye, reject or abandon them; he who has promised to “gather the lambs with his arm, and “to carry them in his bosom;” he who has always shewn himself more especially concerned for objects of distress and destitution, the poor, the prisoner, the stranger, the oppressed, the widow, and fatherless, and such as have none to help them; in a word, he whose Providence is then nearest, and whose assistance is then readiest, when his creatures are most forsaken by others?

To procure the divine interposition, it is urged

urged by the Psalmist as a prevailing argument, that he was unprotected and desolate. "O be not far from me: for trouble is nigh at hand, and there is none to help me. I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me; refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. I cried unto thee, O Lord: I said, thou art my refuge." The common Father "hears the young ravens when they cry unto him," and are early left by their hard-hearted dams. Are not ye better than many ravens? "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" says God by the prophet. He speaks of it as a monstrous thing, and scarce credible in any. Can she forget—She, in the singular number. The answer is remarkable: "Yea, they may forget"—They, in the plural; confessing it possible, that more than one such wretch may be found amongst the dregs of nature. "Can a woman forget her sucking child? Yea, They may forget, yet I will not forget thee." Can you figure any thing more tender and soothing? Can you hesitate a moment to throw yourselves on "the everlasting arms, on his right hand, who rides on the heavens for your help, on his excellency in the sky?" Or hav-

ing so done, can you harbour a doubt of your safety, while “ your place of defence is the “ munition of rocks ? ”

BUT to proceed to our last argument at this time ; let the injustice, unkindness, and treachery of the world, engage you to greater Prudence, Purity, and Devotion. Any natural, or any amiable tie, by which you are, or may be bound, God forbid that I should seek to slacken. Moderate affections for proper objects you are allowed, you are called to indulge. By this means you will fill your places in society, or be in the way to fill them ; at the same time that you will enjoy the best thing in human life, the friendly feelings of the heart. But shall I repeat once more, what in one shape or another has been said so often, that whenever these are ill directed, or carried too far, they are sure to entangle in guilt and disquietude ? Now to prevent, as much as possible, the wandering of your passions, the Almighty makes use of the passions of others. To bring good out of evil is the glory of his government. The worthlessness of those who have abused their freedom, he permits as a warning to you, no less than a punishment to them.

If men will endeavour to despoil that virtue which they should cherish, to corrupt those

those minds which they should improve, in a word to ruin that sex whose honour and welfare are in a great measure entrusted with them; should not such baseness fill you with disdain and abhorrence? Can any of you be so mean, so surpassing mean, as to doat on the traitors? Even where their aim is not destruction, where merely for amusement they flatter, or soothe, should you suffer yourselves to be seduced into fondness? How foolish to be taken with those little superficial attentions, that are so easily learnt in the school of fashion, and so frequently practised to hide a hollow, or disguise an unfeeling soul.

ARE you ignorant of its being an established system amongst men of gaiety and pleasure, that your sex have no principles; that you are designed only to serve their purposes; and that, when you refuse to do so, it is mere pride, or gross dissimulation? Can you think of this, and not be offended? Will you continue to prefer such characters to the sober, sedate, and sentimental?

YOU often behold the wrecks of beauty that has been blasted, and of innocence that has been betrayed. Providence allows those miserable beings to carry their effrontery so far as to appear without shame in every public place, the monuments of male falshood as well

well as female infatuation ; and can you fail of being impressed with salutary terror ?

CAN you restrain the lightning of indignant virtue from darting out on those men that, in your company, dare to speak a language unfit for you to hear ? Should not your eyes at least make them sensible of the affront offered to your ears ? And if they are hardened enough not to be ashamed, does it not become you ever after to shun their sight, as you would shun a bear or a satyr ? I am sure you will think so, if you consult either the dignity of your sex, or the purity of your minds.

LOVE grafted on esteem, or fed by it, is a just and noble principle. But how has it been disgraced by worthless pretenders ! Join, my sisters, with all your power to vindicate its honours. Let the sanctity of your conduct serve, as much as possible, to recal the passion from empty form and criminal indulgence, from the blind admiration of an outside, and the short-lived gratification of youthful desire, to a genuine, holy, and enlightened affection ; such as springing chiefly from a sympathy of honest and generous hearts, shall flourish when fancy, youth, and beauty, are no more.

S E R M O N IX. 61

IF women will marry men of bad morals, if from whatever motive they will manifestly endanger their own salvation, by forming so intimate a connexion with those who betray a total neglect of theirs; what can we say either for religion, or the sex, that will make any impression on those who are prejudiced against both? What can *she* plead that accepts, without scruple, the hand a man, who is seldom or ever seen in a place of worship, and whose companions are known to be profane or licentious? Is this to act, in the greatest concern of life, like a person of principle?

IT is a common complaint, nor can the fact be denied, that most of our young gentlemen now a days entirely disregard religious institutions. But how can it be expected they should do otherwise, so long as they find themselves, in general, no way the less acceptable to the ladies, for such fashionable impiety? —What a scandal in “women professing “Godliness?”

AMIDST so much disorder, and so many snares on all hands, what can be so wise for you, my Christian friends, as to take refuge more and more in the sanctuary of Devotion? —Let us not dissemble the truth. The greater
part

part of either sex study to prey on one another. The world, in too many instances, is a theatre of war between men and women. Every stratagem is tried, and every advantage taken, on the side of both. On the side of the former, strength and daring are joined to art and ambition, in which the latter abound. To make a truce they often meet. Even preliminaries towards a peace are often proposed. Individuals pass over to the camp of the enemy, and are reconciled. But what shall we say of the contending powers at large? Methinks they resemble this, and a neighbouring kingdom, between which a general truce is always short, and a national peace never secure.

To many young women the preacher will seem as one that mocks. The men they consider as their best friends; and a lasting union is what they long for as the height of happiness. An union, by one means or another, will probably take place. And if it shall, to know that it proved lasting, entire, and happy, as happy as the present state permits, would, you may be well assured, give the preacher pleasure. But if from this, or any imaginable connexion upon earth, you hope for compleat felicity; your hopes will be vain. Imperfect yourselves, you have no right to expect perfection from men. In the
most

S E R M O N IX. 63

most agreeable attachments, you will still find a mixture. The best characters will sometimes say, or do that, which shall occasion pain; daily intercourse will dull the relish of delight; and disagreeable accidents, but especially severe distress, will not improve the taste for it. Devotion, dearly beloved, Devotion will ever be your surest and sweetest resource. “ Acquaint yourselves therefore now
“ with God, and be at peace.”

EVEN now, I doubt not, some of you perceive that all besides is uncertain and unsatisfactory. Your father and mother have forsaken you by death; or which is worse a great deal, by unnatural cruelty, or horrible selfishness. You have not perhaps in the world a friend to supply their place: or if you have, you cannot but know that human friendships are often fallacious, and like other human comforts always precarious. Every thing in nature is subject to vicissitude; and nothing more usual than for men to adopt a different deportment as their circumstances or interests, their opinions or humours, vary. There is but one immutable friend, “ a friend that
“ sticks closer than a brother,” a lover, or a parent. “ He is the same yesterday, and to
“ day, and for ever. He will never leave
“ you: he will never forsake you.” He has engaged himself by his promise; and “ he is
“ not

“ not man that he should lie, neither the son
 “ of man that he should repent.”

I HAVE often thought that, in some respects, there is not any creature so forlorn or exposed, as a young woman, beautiful, unexperienced, single, almost wholly friendless, bred to affluence, left in dependance, perhaps in indigence, of which some wretch, cursed with wealth, is willing to avail himself for the vilest ends. While I paint such a situation, who does not see the end of Piety? What remains for this pretty sufferer, but to hold fast her innocence at all adventures, and look up to him “ with whom the fatherless find mercy.”——“ Protect me, O my heavenly Father, my only sure and never failing friend; protect thy poor, dependant, helpless creature. From this wilderness of life I lift up my eyes to thee; to thy throne of pity I stretch out my arms for succour. Behold, I am needy, and feeble, and full of affliction. I tread among snares; I tremble for fear.— But Thou art merciful. Save me, O Lord, most mighty; save me from evil men, from vain companions, from folly, from myself. My wants supply, most gracious: my weakness strengthen: for ever guard the virtue by thee implanted. Thou art the guide of my youth; lead me in a plain path, because of my enemies. Let none have power to
 ‘ hurt

S E R M O N IX. 65

‘ hurt me ; may some have the goodness to
‘ support my steps. Send down Wisdom from
‘ thy holy heavens, that she may labour with
‘ me continually, and sweetly counsel me in
‘ all my doings. In Thee, O God, in Thee
‘ alone have I put my trust : let me never be
‘ confounded. Be my God for ever and ever,
‘ and my guide even unto death. I ask it for
‘ the sake of my Divine Redeemer. Amen.’

S

S E R M O N X.

O N

F E M A L E P I E T Y.

—M

Favo

w

pr

D

dign

Wha

but a

men

you

here

defig

Of th

rable.

be fa

lucen

media

oget

fies

re th

nes

S E R M O N X.

On Female Piety.

1 TIM. ii. 10.

—Which becometh women professing Godliness.

PROV. xxxi. 30.

Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, She shall be praised.

DEVOTION, my beloved hearers, is a business of too much importance and dignity to be yet dismissed from our meditation. What has been already said on this head, is but a small part of that which I would recommend to your attention. From a former hint you will already conceive, that to present you here with a regular system of piety is not my design. Such an attempt were superfluous. Of the spiritual kind there are books innumerable, in which you will meet with all that can be said on the subject in general. The Influements to Religion, which are more immediately derived from your sex and situation, together with those Effects, and those Exercises of it, that concern you more particularly, are the points to which my plan properly confines me.

I WILL

I WILL begin this discourse by removing a bar, which has been thrown in our way by those who have appeared fond of every occasion to depreciate the better half of the human species. The devotion of women has been considered as nothing more than the passion of love directed to a divine object, when in reality they longed for an inferior one, or happened to be disappointed in their wishes: an opinion which has given occasion to some wit and more ridicule.

It seems to have proceeded chiefly from two causes; the amorous style which has by too many female pens been adopted into devotional writings; and the multitudes of young women who, denied originally the opportunity of indulging their natural inclinations, or afterwards crossed in the pursuit of them, have flung themselves headlong into the gloomy retreats of a mistaken piety, where they have been taught to offer at a heavenly shrine those fires which were not suffered to burn freely elsewhere.

BUT now on the former circumstance I would observe, that the language of love has not so far as I know, been admitted into books of devotion more frequently by female than by male authors; and that in this practice, both have probably thought themselves warranted by the
 exampl

S E R M O N X. 71

example of Solomon in his well-known Song: a composition, of which I must needs say, that how naturally soever it came from a monarch of his character, in those earlier days of eastern imagination and eastern ardour, it should by no means be made a model for Christian writers. In the New Testament, although produced from the same region, we find very little of this sort, and that little in the chastest and purest strain; at the same time that there we are expressly required, and taught, “to worship God who is a spirit, in spirit and in truth.” But when we disapprove of the practice as indiscreet, must we condemn it too as sensual; or because in some it may have been the ebullition of a lascivious fancy, shall we pronounce it to be so in all? Certain it is, that among such as have used it, there have been not a few eminently distinguished by the purity of their manners?

IN the case of those numerous votaries to the Church of Rome, who by violence or craft, despondence or superstition, are immured in convents; what can be more natural, more reasonable, or in truth more necessary, than that being deprived of the pleasures of this world, they should ask consolation from the next? Or if finding it impossible to cultivate one of the strongest propensities of the human heart, by that kind of commerce which Na-
ture

ture intended, can they be justly blamed for turning to an object, whose infinite excellence shall furnish endless scope for the best sentiments and noblest affections of the soul, those that are immediately connected with piety? Will not the same way of reasoning be applicable to women living in the world? I apprehend, it will.

BUT the opinion we now examine would, at bottom, reflect no dishonour on feminine devotion, did not those who entertain it proceed upon a low idea of the passion referred to. Whatever hold that passion, for purposes apparently wise, may take at first of the animal part of our frame, they are utter strangers to its genuine character, who do not know that it is capable of rising to the utmost refinement. By pleading the cause of Virtuous Love, I shall be able to prove its connexion with that which is Divine to be founded in nature; I mean in cultivated nature, where a sense of the Divinity obtains. As virtuous love operates on both the sexes pretty nearly alike, what I am going to observe of its effects on the men may, I believe, be justly applied to the impressions produced by it on the women.

A MAN sees in some public place a great number of young ladies whom he never spoke to. He surveys them all. He is struck with

one,

one, who is really less beautiful than several others present, and who is so even in his eyes: in her favour he decides at once. It is a common case: how shall we account for it? I conceive, thus: Every countenance expresses, or is thought to express, a character peculiar to itself; and that which corresponds most with our particular taste in the way of temper, behaviour, understanding, we necessarily and spontaneously prefer. By this character therefore, whether real or imaginary, we are determined. As was hinted in a former discourse, it is the soul we seek. With mind only can mind unite. That which is presented to our eyes attracts us merely as an image of that which they cannot perceive. Our senses may be said to tie the knot; but, strictly speaking, the knot is formed in the soul. Our senses are properly the vehicles of our affection; but to that affection they still act in subordination. It is supreme. Its power indeed is so great, that were the gratification of the senses, in the passion we are now considering, to interfere with the interest of our nobler part, or with this exalted sentiment which constitutes its joy, they would be sacrificed without hesitation. To virtuous love the spirit of sacrifice is essential. What hazards, hardships, losses, and pains, has not this generous attachment encountered, with pleasure and even with ecstasy; happy in manifesting its zeal

by the most arduous proofs ! To mention but one instance amongst ten thousand, and that recorded in Holy Writ ; we are told, that “ Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and “ that they seemed to him but a few days.” —Why ? “ For the love he had to her.”

BUT now suppose the man we have just imagined, to cherish with fondness the sudden impression made upon him by a certain appearance ; to be introduced to the lady, and to admire her more and more for those internal qualities, which from that appearance he presumes her to possess. With her looks too he is every day more deeply smitten, but still as they are the fancied picture of her mind. This ideal form follows him every where. Business, company, amusement, he could not endure but for the thoughts of her, which are for ever intermingling. Her conversation, her smiles, her approbation, even the slightest marks of her regard, are to him happiness unequalled, and such as can only be excelled by the entire possession of the endearing object. He pursues, he obtains it. And now suppose him to discover, that the character he used to contemplate with transport was merely imaginary ; that she is absolutely destitute of the dispositions, the sentiments, in one word, the soul which he has fondly figured—Need I speak the rest ? Ah, what disappointment and misery !

misery ! Where now is his love ? Where the sacred, fervent, elevated passion, he so lately fostered as the felicity of his life ? Intellectual and moral beauty he chiefly sought. He finds it not : and because he does not find it, what happens ? His very senses, though remaining constitutionally the same, revolt, are disgusted, and chilled. The enchanting face enchants no more : and why ? Because it no longer reflects the image that inflamed his breast. A fool or a tyrant starts up there, where sense and softness seemed to reside.

BUT now let us reverse this unhappy part of the scene, and suppose that the lady's real character answers to her appearance ; that, instead of losing, she gains by a more intimate acquaintance ; in short, that certain hidden graces, which no feature, form, or air could fully express, display themselves as circumstances rise to call them forth : what will be the consequence ? That the youthful ardour of our lover will increase ? No, but a better ardour will ; that of rational esteem, sentimental complacence, and self-congratulation. The other, as he advances in life, will gradually abate, and at length vanish. What then ? Will his tenderness vanish, or his affection abate ? By no means. We have seen that from the beginning it was the love of her mind principally. It is so now more than

ever. It has less emotion; it has more solidity: it is less earthly; it is more divine. It is love mellowed into friendship.—What shall I say? It is the finest feeling of the human heart: and the attraction grows, partly by habit, partly by the increase of those qualities that caused it on her side, and partly by the improvement of good dispositions on his. Those tumultuous and irregular pleasures to which perhaps, before he knew her, he was addicted, have now lost their relish. The calm, yet interesting joys, he tastes in her society, occupy all his leisure. From every engagement, whether of the busy or idle kind, he returns to her with new delight, glad to shake off the interrupting world, and impatient when it compels him to any long absence. By the lovely sympathies of her gentle bosom, his cares are soothed, his labours softened, and his losses rendered easy. Is he successful? His success is triumph, from this thought, ‘I shall be able to make her more happy whom my soul loveth.’ Is she in pain or sickness? Does her health decline? Will this man look on unconcerned? Ah! no: he will hang over her bed of distress with augmented fondness, with an anguish more charming than all the luxury of sensual indulgence. Is her bloom withered? Are the allurements of youth at last gone? Will he grow indifferent? No, no

in his eye she is handsome still. In all she says, and does, and looks, he still beholds, and still admires, the unfaded and unfading beauties of her soul.

If any profane or insensible wretch, prone “to speak evil of the things which he knows not,” and which he cannot know, should affect to treat this representation with ridicule, as visionary and unnatural, I can only pity him. You who are disposed to be ingenuous and candid, may rest assured that it is taken from life. Those whom it resembles will own it true, while they find it imperfect. But imperfect as it is, it will, if I mistake not, be sufficient to prove the point for which I have produced it.

ABSTRACT, my sisters, from that regard to person, which in the purest passion between the sexes we have acknowledged to be an original ingredient, but which we have found to be only an inferior ingredient, and one whose operation is soon diminished; abstract from this, and what is there in all the rest, that may not be traced to the love of excellence? But what else, I would gladly know, is the leading idea in the love of God? Between that First of Beings, and the most accomplished of his creatures, the distance indeed is infinite. The fairest

virtues we see around us are at best but faint emanations from him, who is "the perfection of beauty." But from these, and from the admiration they inspire, it is, that we are led up to him, as by so many pleasing though scattered streams to their fountain.

AND now suppose that a young woman, possessed with the belief of this highest excellence, is disappointed in her prospects of an agreeable union with one of our sex: she turns her thoughts to heaven. She contemplates truth and rectitude, wisdom and goodness, power, mercy, and faithfulness, in their source. She considers them as all working together for her good; she sees them shining through the cloud of disappointment. From this cloud she hears, as it were, her Maker thus addressing her: 'My daughter, give me thy heart. Thy supreme affection none upon earth can deserve. Human attainments are all defective; human regards are often insincere. Put not your trust in the son of man: he may deceive, or he may change, or he may not be able to protect you. But of this kind you have nothing to fear from your Creator. Throw thyself, my child, on my friendship.'—She is not disobedient to the heavenly call. She prostrates herself

self in the presence of the Most High. To him she devotes that heart which he formed; to him she pours it out with freedom. She adores the perfections of his nature; the frailties of her own, with all the failings of her life past, she penitently confesses; her tears flow. Her mind is relieved; consolation pervades her soul; out of weakness she waxes strong. Virtue never appeared to her half so fair; Religion rises before her in full majesty; everlasting objects open to her view; solitude and silence begin to charm. Converse with her God, with her Saviour, with her Bible, with Herself, yields a pleasure hitherto unknown. In the midst of society she longs for its return; from the dissipation of amusement she retreats with joy; self-denial for the sake of God, and goodness, loses its name; her duty is her delight; the spirit of sacrifice is felt in all its nobleness. She is great, and she is happy.— Say, ye sons of raillery, ye scoffers at female devotion, declare; what is there in all this, unnatural, irrational, or in any respect unsuitable to the best conceptions of the human mind?

FROM what I have said let none imagine, that I mean to insinuate female devotion may not be found in married as well as single life; or that a woman will not have recourse to piety, unless she is driven to it by disappoint-

ed love. This, like every other distress, and more perhaps than any other, will prompt a young person of reflexion to turn to the Almighty. But of worth or ingenuity those surely have no true feeling, who think that the character of the Supreme cannot from a heart well disposed command an affectionate veneration in any condition, or under any circumstance whatsoever.

THAT in Female nature there are certain Qualities, which seem peculiarly calculated, by the grace of God, to dispose it for the reception and culture of this divine principle, I will proceed in the next place to demonstrate.

THAT your sex are, in a particular degree, susceptible of all the tender affections, will, I presume, be allowed by most. Their propensity to those, with which the passion of love is more immediately complicated, has been charged upon them by many as matter of reproach. What to me appears in general to do them honour, is the warmth of their attachments, and their aptitude to be affected with whatever has a tendency to touch the heart. But I have always thought that the spirit of devotion depends on sentiment, rather than ratiocination; on the feelings of gratitude and wonder, joy and sorrow, triumph and contrition, hope
and

and fear, rather than on theological disquisition however profound, or pious speculation however exalted. Religion, it is certain, has been often mazed and lost in the labyrinth of school-divinity. Although, in “contending for the faith once delivered to the saints” against the attacks of unbelievers, sound criticism and dispassionate argument be undoubtedly the proper weapons, and although to thinking minds they be also the natural instruments of information and conviction; yet it is not by them that the devotional principle is awakened and kept alive.

FOR unintelligible impressions, or wild enthusiasm, I am not an advocate. He that is, exposes religion to disgrace. Common sense, calm reflexion, universal righteousness, a humanity unlimited by party, a moderation that can applaud virtue in an enemy; these, my dear charge, must never be given up on any pretence, or for any persuasion. A faith without morality, a devotion repugnant to reason, are not Christianity; but hypocrisy, or superstition. Beware of those that under the mask of zeal would seek to remove you from the only ground which, by God’s blessing, can secure your steadfastness, improvement, and comfort; I mean a sober evangelical piety.

IN the days of the apostles there were those that “ lay in wait to deceive, that crept into “ widows houses, and led captive silly wo- “ men.” In our days their successors are numerous. I say again, Of such beware; “ lest “ by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve “ through his subtilty, so your minds should “ be corrupted from the simplicity that is in “ Christ.” Remember always, that whatever teacher or teachers would avail themselves of the warmth of your passions, or the vivacity of your imaginations, to seduce you into any system unfriendly to a good temper and a good life; do either mistake the true design of the gospel, or have an ill design on you. But then on the other hand you may be equally assured, that whatever teacher or teachers would attempt by dry disputation, or cold enquiry, to convert or edify souls, are strangers alike to nature and to Christianity. What in truth is the latter, but an affectionate and powerful address to the former, divinely adapted to take hold not of the understanding only, but of the conscience, the will, and the passions; that is, of the most vital and operative principles of the heart?

AMONG the rest I mentioned the passion of Fear. We are told by an Apostle, that “ perfect “ love

“love casteth out fear.” But perfect love, in matters of religion, cannot, strictly understood, be supposed compatible with human frailty. To that is the system of Jesus graciously proportioned. There the passion I speak of is applied to, in a manner the most striking that can be conceived. But for what purpose? To damp resolution, or dishearten hope? No; but to restrain the impetuosity of desire, and to prevent the misery of disorder; not to frighten you from the mercy-seat, but to shew you the necessity of taking shelter there. You, my female friends, are naturally fearful. A conscious weakness prompts you continually to seek protection. Feeling yourselves, and knowing your sex to be helpless, you fly to men for safety. But do you always find it in them?—Need I point you to a sure refuge? I have done it already. Are you mortified at the timidity of your nature? Are you depressed by the feebleness of your frame? I know not that you have cause. I am certain you have not; if a sense of your condition has induced you to put yourselves under the guardianship of Omnipotence. Many of you, it is evident, have the art of turning your infirmities to your own advantage, so far as concerns your influence with our sex. But that power, which you thus extract from imbecility, is often, alas! by the unhappiness of your passions, only rendered productive of new and greater weaknesses;

nesses; whereas, if you were wise, you might on your natural frailty build an invincible strength, by securing the protection of the Almighty.

YOUR Encouragements to do this, by the practice of such a piety as I am now recommending, I will consider in the next place; those encouragements, I mean, which both Providence and Scripture present to your sex with an appropriation as observable in itself, as it is merciful to you.

· NOTHING can be more plain, than that Providence has placed you most commonly in circumstances peculiarly advantageous for the exercises of devotion, and for the preservation of that virtue, without which every profession of godliness must be regarded as an impudent pretence. The situation of men lays them open to a variety of temptations, that lie out of your road. The bustle of life, in which they are generally engaged, leaves them often but little leisure for holy offices. Their passions are daily subject to be heated by the ferment of business; and how hard is it for them to avoid being importuned to excess, while sometimes a present interest, frequently a pressing appetite, and yet more frequently the fear of ridicule, stimulates them

to

to comply! How very hard for a young man to withstand

“ The world’s dread laugh,
 “ Which scarce the firm philosopher can
 “ scorn!”

In the case of our sex, do we not often see ranked on the side of licentiousness that reputation which ought to attend on sobriety alone? Is not the last openly laughed at by those, to whose opinion giddy young men will pay most respect, their own companions? Is not its contrary cried up as a mark of spirit? And if, in their unrestrained conversation amongst a diversity of humours, they meet with affronts, are they not constantly told, that the maxims of honour require them to take revenge? Is not all this extremely unfavourable to the religious life, of which so great a part consists in purity and prayer, in regularity and coolness, in self-command and mild affections? But from such snares your sex are happily exempted.

IN many instances men are attacked by folly, before they surrender; whereas women must generally invite it by art, or rather indeed take it by violence, ere they can possess themselves of its guilty pleasures. So far the Almighty, in consideration of their debility, and from a regard to their innocence, has raised

ed a kind of fence about them, to prevent those wilder excursions into which the other sex are frequently carried, with a freedom unchecked by fear, and favoured by custom.

CORRUPT as the world is, it certainly does expect from young women a strict decorum; nor, as we have seen before, does it easily forgive them the least deviation. And then, while you remain without families of your own, few of you are necessarily so engaged, as not to have a large portion of time with daily opportunities for recollection, if you are inclined to improve them. I go farther, and say, that your improving them by a piety the most regular and avowed, if withal unaffected and amiable, will be no sort of objection to the men, but much the reverse.

A BIGOTED woman every man of sense will carefully shun, as a most disagreeable, and even dangerous companion. But the secret reverence, which that majestic form Religion imprints on the hearts of all, is such, that even they who will not submit to its dictates themselves, do yet wish it to be regarded by those with whom they are connected in the nearest relations. The veriest infidel of them all, I am apt to believe, would be sorry to find his sister, daughter, or wife, under no restraint from religious principle. Thus it is, that even the greatest libertines are forced to pay, at the same

same instant, a kind of implicit respect to the two main objects of their profligate satire, Piety and Women; while they consider these as formed for each other, and tacitly acknowledge that the first is the only effectual means of ensuring the good behaviour of the last. Let them talk as long, and as contemptuously as they will, about that easy credulity, and those superstitious terrors, which they pretend to be the foundation of your religion; something within will always give them the lie, so long as they perceive that your religion renders you more steadily virtuous, and more truly lovely.

BUT let us turn to Scripture, and see what peculiar incitement you have from thence to the profession and practice of godliness. How encouraging to reflect, that the very first promise made to the human race distinguished your sex with a mark of honour, as signal as it was unexampled! Need I explain myself by saying, that the greatest personage who ever visited our world, he who came on the most important design, and who executed it in the most wonderful manner, none other, in short, than “the son of God, who was manifested to destroy the works of the devil,” and on their ruins to raise an empire of righteousness and happiness, elevated as heaven, and lasting as eternity—that He, I say, was from the beginning predicted under the singular and interesting

ing character of “the seed of the woman?” How exalting a circumstance for your whole sex, that the Saviour of men, the admiration of angels, and the prince of heaven, was accordingly “in the fulness of time made of a woman!” And, Oh, my young friends, what dignity will it for ever reflect on maiden virtue, that “a virgin conceived and bore a son, the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth?” Where is the religion, or the philosophy, that has lifted your nature so high, or placed the beauty of female purity and excellence in a light so conspicuous and noble?

NOR must we forget to take notice of the particular honours, with which individuals of your sex have had their memories transmitted to posterity by the sacred records. Not to insist on the females of the Old Testament, that “through faith have obtained a good report;” it merits your observation how many we read of in the New, who, for the duties of devotedness to their Saviour, the liberalities of respect to his person, and even the heroism of zeal in his cause, are marked out with a pre-eminence perfectly distinguishable.

WHEN of his apostles the most sanguine had denied, had even forsworn, and all the rest had forsaken him and fled; we find those
faithful

faithful and gentle creatures surrounding his cross with lamentations, which they were neither ashamed nor afraid to avow. Never sure did female tears appear more graceful. Nor were they merely that transient flow of mechanical grief, so easily furnished by too many eyes, where the heart has little or no share in the soft effusion. The love which those devout daughters of Jerusalem bore to their master, nothing could extinguish. Who has not read that affecting story of the visit to his sepulchre, paid by the pious Mary's and their little company, together with the kind, generous, and, as it might have proved, very hazardous purpose which produced it? Their setting out alone, at so early an hour, while it was yet dark, to engage in so solemn a scene, afforded a striking proof of the courage and constancy with which their piety had inspired them, amidst all that spirits like theirs must have suffered from so many circumstances of sorrow. In their countenances, words, and gestures on that occasion, I think I read the painful, yet amiable emotions, that wrought in their tender throbbing hearts. I am particularly charmed with the eager anxiety, and beautiful distress of Mary Magdalene, whose gratitude for the transcendent mercies she had received, did then flame out with such uncommon fervour. While I contemplate the whole transaction, with the conduct that preceded it, I cannot but admire that justice
which,

which, in preference to all others, honoured those excellent women with being the first witnesses and publishers of Christ's resurrection, or, as an antient writer has expressed it, Apostles to the Apostles themselves. A very natural, as it is in effect a most memorable attestation to their superior attachment, and unconquerable fidelity. Surely it was not in vain, that the annals of inspiration have registered those pleasing facts with such particularity. There they stand, and will for ever stand, illustrious monuments of female worth, in a conjuncture most peculiarly trying, and of the extraordinary approbation it met with from him, in whose sight devotion and perseverance, affection and faith, will always outshine the more showy qualities that fill the world with history and wonder.

I SHOULD have mentioned before this, the friendship of Jesus to the sisters of Lazarus, his applause of the woman of Canaan, and his pathetic address to the women who followed him weeping, while he carried his cross. It is likewise worthy of remark, that of all the disciples, he who seems, in a certain divine sweetness of disposition, to have resembled him most, directed one of those epistles which make a part of our scriptures to a Lady, a person of distinction much respected by him and all the believers of that time for her eminent piety, and that of her children.

AND

AND now if, with encouragements like these to the love of God and of your Saviour, any of you, my fair auditory, should live in forgetfulness of both; what shall we say of such, but that they are destitute of true ambition, and totally insensible to the most distinguishing favours of Heaven?

BUT perhaps we shall be told, that those perpetual flatteries which many of you meet with from men on account of its inferior gifts, such as youth, beauty, fancy, sprightliness, prevent or destroy those better sentiments which you might be otherwise disposed to cultivate. I doubt it not. But do you plead this as an excuse? Your situation, we have granted all along, subjects you to temptations in particular instances. But we have now seen, that it frees you from other very dangerous snares, and includes the most powerful attractions to your duty. What are you to infer from the whole, but that you ought to avail yourselves of these advantages, for fortifying and guarding you where-ever you lie exposed?

I HAVE just named what appears to me your sex's weakest side. To arm you on that, I have had opportunities of offering a variety of precautions. I now add, and it shall be my last consideration on this occasion, that Revelation

lation concurs with Reason, to furnish the strongest weapons of defence against that adulation, which is so great an enemy to your souls.

THAT your souls are immortal is probable from reason, and certain from revelation. But the arguments from either I hold it unnecessary to propose here. To attempt the conviction of female infidels falls not within my present design. Indeed I fear it were a hopeless undertaking. That preposterous vanity, and that open or secret profligacy, by which they have been warped into scepticism, would in all likelihood baffle any endeavours of mine. If they are not, however, so far gone in that unhappy system, as to be resolved against all sober enquiry, I would earnestly recommend to their perusal a few of the many excellent writings, which this age and country have produced in favour of religion both natural and revealed. At the same time I would just remind them, that the daring and disputatious spirit of unbelief is utterly repugnant to female softness, and to that amiable docility which, in their sex, is so peculiarly pleasing to ours; not to mention that from an infidel partner a man can have no prospect of consolation in those hours of distress, when the hopes of futurity can alone administer relief.—To you, my Christian hearers, I was going to observe, that the steadfast and serious belief of immortality,

lity, as pointed out in your frame, and brought to light by the gospel, will excite such a mighty concern to secure its grand interests, such a high sense of your internal dignity, such a predominant ambition of being acceptable in his eye, who can make you happy or wretched for ever, as must necessarily lessen in your's every external and perishing advantage.

IF you are really possessed by those principles, he that from spiritual and everlasting objects would turn your chief regard to skin-deep and short-lived allurements, will surely, in a moment of recollection at least, be looked upon by you as a tempter to be shunned. That pride of life, which in the eye of folly swells into such importance, will shrink and fade away into its native littleness in her estimation, whose thoughts are often entertained with the magnificence and splendor of eternal things. To that young woman who, like her of Bethany, "has chosen the good part," who meekly pensive sits at the feet of Jesus, and with delighted reverence hears his words; the insinuation of the vicious, the impertinence of the vain, in short, whatever would rob her of her portion, or obstruct her enjoying it, will not, I think, be over pleasing. To her the care of her salvation is the one thing needful. Compared with that, even the best things of this world appear, what indeed they are, but trifles; in which, because the condition
of

of mortality makes it unavoidable, she shares with cheerfulness, but in which she shares with moderation too, because she has business to mind of infinite moment.

“ WHAT shall it profit a man, if he shall
 “ gain the whole world, and lose his own
 “ soul?” The question was asked by him, who knew right well the value of both. Had he asked, ‘ What shall it profit a Woman, if
 ‘ she shall gain the whole world, and lose her
 ‘ own soul?’ would the state of the question have been altered? You will not say it. Weighed against a soul, the empire of the earth were dust in the balance. What then shall we call those things, for which sinners are daily forfeiting their salvation? Tell me, ye flattered fair ones, what is the worth of praise or admiration from knaves, or from fools, for which so many of you are ready to forfeit yours? Ye daughters of Vanity, tell me what will dress, or show, or gaiety of any kind, where God and goodness are neglected, “ profit in the day of wrath?” In that day of discovery and decision, what will appearances avail?—Give me back these last sentences: I had forgotten: Dress, show, gaiety, appearances, will be then no more.—But hold; before we look so far, let us see what they can perform now.

THEY

THEY can attract attention ; they can allure desire ; they can excite encomium, deceive the unwary, and captivate the weak, for a season. But inform us, ye boasted beauties, who are told every day of your power, what permanent essential good can it procure ? Bring it to the proof. Bid the sun that measures your days, stand still ; command the current of time that hurries you along, to stop ; say to wrinkled age, to fell disease, to grim death, Approach me not, ye frightful forms. Alas ! they are deaf as the adder, and stubborn as the rock. Try then your influence in some lesser thing. Make the experiment on the head-ach : enjoin it to be gone. It goes not. But perhaps the heart-ach may hear, and obey : your inward feelings at least should be under your controul. But you have given them the rein ; nor will they be checked on a sudden. While you have thought only of conquering other hearts, you have suffered headstrong passions to conquer your own. Summon then your worshippers, and order them to interpose ; see if by all their incense, and all their zeal, they can keep you young in spite of years, or make you glad in spite of affliction. They are silent. Ask them, if they will undertake to die for you ? They retire. Call after them—‘ Will you answer for us at the judgment day ? ’—Again that awful period rushes on the mind. Ah, my friends, what will

will you do then without Religion? The thought is big with horror. Then, then it shall be seen, with an evidence bright and terrible as the funeral fire of Nature, that “beauty is deceitful, and favour is vain.”—But what means that universal shout of human and angelic voices? What words are those, which I hear resounding through the assembly of the universe? “A woman that feareth the Lord, She shall be praised!”

S E R M O N XI.
O N
F E M A L E D E V O T I O N
A N D
G O O D W O R K S.

VOL. II.

F

S

On

I w

a

n

a

A

Y

all

wi

ing

wh

loc

on

ou

co

an

ta

in

be

m

V

be

a

to

S E R M O N XI.

On Female Devotion and Good Works.

1 Tim. ii. 8, 9, 10.

I will—that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array, but (which becometh women professing Godliness) with Good Works.

YOU have seen a venerable matron encircled with a race of lovely daughters, all different from one another, yet all marked with an air of mutual resemblance, and taking jointly after their honoured parent, to whom from time to time they direct their looks with dutiful attention; while she smiles on each by turns, superintends their behaviour, prescribes their several occupations, encourages them in every thing praise-worthy, and, with a proper regard to their respective talents and dispositions, trains them to growing excellence. In her, my fair ones, you beheld an emblem of Religion. Thus is that most dignified of all forms surrounded by the Virtues, her beautiful offspring; thus do they bear the lineaments of their common descent, and near affinity; and thus—But I leave you to trace the particulars of the similitude. The

general truth on which it is founded, seems plainly intimated in our text, where Godliness is assumed as the leading principle of all that the Apostle inculcates on women. As women professing Christianity he addresses them; and whatever a consistency with that profession demands, he would be understood to enjoin. He mentions particularly modest apparel, shamefacedness, sobriety, and Good Works. It now remains to enforce the last of these, together with those Kind Affections which they presuppose; to touch as we go along on their Connexion with the Principle which gives them birth; and then, as briefly as possible, to shew in what manner that Principle may be cultivated with most success.

BUT before we proceed, truth requires one mortifying observation. It is this, that amongst the many women professing Godliness, the number of those that practise it is comparatively small. In all professions, indeed, the mere pretenders will ever be numerous. They will be most so, in those that are at once reputable and difficult. That of religion, as was formerly remarked, is approved of in your sex even by such as laugh at it in ours. At the same time it is certain, that when the habits of piety have not been very early acquired, and very happily directed, by means of a wise education, the rarest as well as the greatest

S E R M O N XI. 101

greatest of blessings, the forming them afterwards will always prove a task too arduous, and painful, for the generality of those who are bred to dissipation and pleasure.

BUT then, on the other hand, where this divine principle is cultivated with care and judgment, it is no less certain, that we may expect from it the most valuable fruits. And first; I say, that a young woman professing Godliness with understanding, and from choice, will never be wanting in the great article of Filial Duty. On this subject, as on many others, the subtilty of speculation has put cales, which there is little probability of happening in life. But where casuistry is not necessary, it is apt to be hurtful, by involving the mind in perplexity and distress, if not warping the heart from that rectitude and simplicity, which, next to the immediate illumination of heaven, are the surest guides to a worthy conduct.

OF filial duty in all its branches she will naturally acquit herself best, who has the deepest sense of religion. "Keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother. Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when

" thou wakest, it shall talk with thee. Who-
 " so revileth his father or his mother, his
 " lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.
 " The eye that mocketh at his father, and
 " despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of
 " the valley shall pick it out, and the young
 " eagles shall eat it." Jesus was subject unto
 his parents. " Children, obey your parents
 " in the Lord : for this is right. Honour thy
 " father and mother (which is the first com-
 " mandment with promise) that it may be
 " well with thee, and thou mayest live long
 " on the earth." All this a Christian daugh-
 ter has read with attention, and reflects upon
 with awe. It corresponds, in substance, with
 the instinct of nature, which it contributes at
 once to corroborate and exalt. She who tru-
 ly reverences her parent in heaven, would
 tremble at the thought of dishonouring his re-
 presentatives on earth. From their authority
 she has acquired the idea of his; and this last,
 including all that can be conceived of great
 and good, is the commanding idea of her life.
 If your parents are indeed pious, and you have
 profited by their instruction and example;
 how will your natural respect for them be
 heightened by religious gratitude ! You will
 think of them with secret rapture, as the in-
 struments of a happy and immortal existence;
 your devoutest prayers for their preservation
 and comfort will daily ascend to the throne of

God

God. Those prayers will, at the same instant, cherish the affections by which they are prompted, and strengthen your resolutions never, for any consideration, to transgress the laws of filial piety. For how could they bear to be the wilful authors of pain to those, for whose felicity they are led by every motive to present every day the most fervent supplications?

BUT many of you have not the happiness of such parents as I have supposed. I am heartily sorry for it. But the want of principle in your parents will not dissolve the ties of duty, however it may affect the sentiments of esteem: and if you think rightly, it will only excite your endeavours, by every winning respectable way, to promote their reformation; for which you will at the same time offer up, from the depth of retirement, your sighs and vows to him who has the hearts of all in his hand. In truth, I am inclined to believe, that if there be any one thing more likely than another to draw down the grace of conversion on a parent, it is such a conduct in a child. Ah, my young friends, what honour and joy would in this case be yours! What a noble superiority to those unfeeling creatures of your sex, who shew no solicitude with regard to their parents, but how to obtain from them some new article of dress, or other gratification, on which they have fixed their foolish fancies!

BUT some of you complain, that your parents are cruel and tyrannical. I sympathize with you yet more, if your complaint is just. But what do you mean by Cruel and Tyrannical? That they will not indulge your extravagant vanity, or that they choose to restrain you from pursuits, which they are apprehensive would be hurtful? It is a wise and a kind severity, if severity it must be termed. How much are you indebted to them for preventing, by a little temporary mortification, real and permanent infelicity! Not to say, that a small degree of delicacy and consideration would teach you to spare them in points, where your stations and their circumstances concur, it may be, to render your requests particularly improper.

BUT I will suppose the worst, that they are really hard-hearted, and unnaturally rigid. It is a mighty trial. To bear it well will require all the fortitude of faith. Here then is an opportunity for displaying your principles in their utmost power. You are called forth to the conflict, as into a field of battle, where even your sex may reap immortal laurels. She is a heroine indeed, whose regard for her parents no unkindness of theirs can conquer.

BUT they would force you to sacrifice your happiness to a man whom you cannot love.

There

There your submission is to stop. No rules of duty can oblige you to involve yourselves in misery and temptation, by entering into engagements to love and to honour, where your hearts withhold their consent.—Barbarous wretches, and base, to offer thus to dispose of your children, as you would of your cattle, to the highest bidder; to attempt, against every maxim of Nature and Religion, to drag the reluctant victims to the altar, and compel them, in the most solemn manner, to profess what they do not mean, and to vow what they cannot perform!

I AM willing however to believe, that such compulsion is used but seldom. The greatest danger is lest you, my unexperienced friends, should be tempted to form the most important of all connexions, without the approbation of your parents.—What shall we say in such a case? Where the resolution is once formed, he that would undertake, by any methods of dissuasion, to prevent its being executed, might as well propose to check a torrent rushing from the top of a mountain. But we would address you while in your sober senses; that is, before your imagination is perverted and inflamed. Be assured, my young hearers, the step in question is very seldom taken but it is sincerely repented; with this bitter aggravation, that such repentance can do no good. The passion that guided and hurried the parties is quickly abated.

bated. There is nothing so transient, as the enthusiasm of mere youthful lovers after marriage. And now that reflexion takes place, and consequences begin to press; a thousand improprieties, fears, and disquietudes, unthought of before, rise up to view, and quite disenchant our romantic adventurers. It is wonderful indeed, what appearances of firmness and satisfaction a woman in such a situation will wear before the world, in order to justify her choice. But surely unhappiness is not lessened by being devoured in secret, and in public disguised. Perpetual restraint is perpetual wretchedness.—Allow me to repeat it. Under the immediate impulse of a violent attachment, I should hardly give you or myself the trouble to argue: but while you are disengaged and calm, it may not be amiss to remind you, that a parent, generally speaking, is much more likely to judge with soundness for a daughter, than she is for herself; that Fancy alone is too sanguine a counsellor to be a prudent one; that protestations of eternal fidelity, of uninterrupted affection, made in the heat of blood, have no solid basis; in a word, that the deliberate advice, which is dictated alike by length of days, knowledge of the world, and earnest solicitude for a child's welfare, ought to be relied upon, rather than the hasty conclusions of juvenile desire.

IT is certain, after all, that the wisest parents may be mistaken about the man they wish a daughter to be connected with. But she that marries with the sanction of their countenance, will from thence, and from their continued or even increased kindness, derive in the case of disappointment a consolation which she could not enjoy, had she brought it on herself by her own indiscretion and obstinacy.

ONE thing here must not be forgotten; that the reflexion of having acted undutifully, in this or any other instance of importance, to those who gave you birth, were alone sufficient to poison the whole pleasure of life; that is, if you are not lost to every ingenuous impression; but especially should their death put it for ever out of your power to make atonement. The horrors of guilt, that in such a circumstance are apt to haunt and distract the mind, more particularly if the parents were uncommonly worthy, I have had repeated opportunities of observing, but have no adequate language to express; so profound is the conviction implanted by Nature of the sacredness of filial piety!—Need I add, that this extends so far as to demand submission in every case, where your duty to God or your peace of mind does not interfere?

BUT

BUT it is not submission alone that is demanded ; nor will she prove in any relation an amiable character, who does not shew herself an affectionate daughter. On the other hand, when a young woman behaves to her parents in a manner particularly respectful and tender, I mean from principle as well as nature, there is nothing good or gentle that may not be expected from her, in whatever condition she is placed. Of this I am persuaded so thoroughly, that, were I to advise any friend of mine as to his choice of a wife, I know not whether my very first counsel would not be, ‘ Look out for one distinguished by her attention and sweetness to her parents.’ The fund of worth and affection indicated by such a behaviour, joined to the habits of duty and consideration thereby contracted, being transferred to the married state, will not fail to render her a mild and obliging companion.

YOUR situation in life, which keeps you more at home than sons, together with the turn of your education, and the softness of your frame, that fit you for a thousand little soothing offices, as well as domestic services, which they cannot properly perform, seem to point out to you a peculiar sphere of filial excellence.—And here I please myself with the thought, that some of your bosoms are at this moment beating with tenderness to-
wards

wards a sick or aged parent, whom Heaven, willing to furnish a field for the exercise of all your gratitude and zeal, has at last thrown upon your care. I think I see you, my charming friend, like some guardian angel, tending day and night the bed of an honoured father, who has lost your mother, and who is worn out with toil, and years, and pain. I see you listening, in deepest silence, to catch the least intimation of his wishes. I see you watching eagerly every look, to learn his wants before he speaks them; now gently raising his languid head to smooth the pillow, or minister some reviving cordial; and then wiping from his reverend face the cold sweats, that begin perhaps to announce the approach of his end. His groans are answered by sighs stealing from you, but suddenly suppressed, for fear of adding to his anxiety on your account. To be the instrument of imparting to him a minute's comfort, a minute's ease, is rapture. Mean while the good old man's eyes are now turned to you, with all the unutterable fondness of paternal love, melted by those marks of duty; anon they are lifted to heaven in thanksgiving for such a child, and supplication for everlasting blessings on your head.—Great God! what must a mind like yours experience in this conjuncture? Where is the daughter of Disobedience or Folly, that ever felt in the gayest hour a satisfaction, a transport to be compared with that, which conscious piety diffuses

fuses through your bleeding heart? Nor will these exalted sensations be at all diminished, if (Providence having denied the supplies which affluence gives) your virtue has prompted you by your labour or ingenuity, or, it may be, by parting with some admired ornament worn in your better days, to procure for a parent in those circumstances necessary support, or seasonable refreshment.

LET me next say somewhat concerning Sisterly Affection. “Behold how good and how “pleasant it is for brethren,” and sisters, “to dwell together in unity!” Precious ointment is not more grateful to the smell, nor morning dew more refreshing to the sight, than domestic love is to the soul. Represent to yourselves a numerous young family, free from care and animosity, full of reverence for their Maker and their parents, ambitious to please and to excel, in a word, pious, dutiful, friendly, happy; where the good humour and good sense of each contribute to the ease and entertainment of all; while those agreeable diversities of temper and understanding that take place amongst them serve, like discords in music, to carry on the intellectual harmony. Who would not wish to be acquainted in such a house; who would not consider it as the abode of felicity? I hope I paint no unusual scene.

WHERE

S E R M O N XI. III

WHERE the members are but few, felicity perhaps is not so often found ; unless it be in the more shady walks of life, where love and innocence delight to frequent. And why is it not ? When I see two sisters, both of them pleasing and both esteemed, living together without jealousy or envy, yielding to one another without affectation, and generously contending who shall do most to advance the consequence and happiness of her friend ; I am highly delighted : dare I add, the more highly, that such characters are not very common ? And why are they not ? The love of a sister for her brothers is much more usual. Whence too does this proceed ?—Examine your own hearts on these several points. Possibly they can explain to you the difference, so observable where there is a competition, and where there is none, or where any tendencies towards it are happily lost in the involutions of a large number.

MARTHA of Bethany was on the whole a worthy woman. She certainly loved her Saviour with sincere devotion. Her solicitude to entertain him in the best manner she could think of, was the result of her respect. But it was carried to an extreme ; and her sister's conduct should have taught her wisdom. Instead of this, she grows peevish, and complains of that sister. She is admonished of her

her fault, while Mary is commended for her better behaviour. “ Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her.” What pity that any tincture of ill humour, under whatever disguise, should have place in any breast where Jesus is revered! Surely there is nothing more beautiful in a Christian Woman, than good temper and kind affections upon all occasions.

I WAS once acquainted with a lady, who seemed to be held up by Providence, as an example of the joint power of these and of divine principle. She lost her father early. Her mother’s want of health made it necessary for her to exert herself with double assiduity and attention, in a family by no means small, of which she was the eldest child. She was naturally active, to a degree very uncommon in one of her disposition, which was the softest and meekest that can be conceived. She had imbibed from her infancy the deepest sense of devotion that I have ever known. It was a devotion of that kind, which meeting with a heart originally upright, produces uniform excellence. Such excellence was hers. When, in the course of a few years, her extraordinary character recommended her to the choice of a man of singular worth, and good fortune; she

she did not, with the selfishness common on such occasions, forget her mother or the family she had left behind her ; but continued, with the entire approbation and cordial concurrence of her husband, to manifest her filial and sisterly regards in the most effectual manner. She was none of those narrow-souled women, who no sooner step into houses of their own, than they seem to have all their affections and ideas absorbed in their new condition ; relinquishing at once the best companions of their youth ; dropping the pen of friendly correspondence, and shrinking up into a little wretched circle of anxieties, that exclude every liberal sentiment, and every enlarged connexion. When the mother of this lady died, which happened not long after, she became a mother to the helpless orphans, superintended their education, watched over their deportment, promoted their settlement in the world, and sympathized with them in all their distresses. When they also spread out into families, she acted like a parent to their children.—To her own, of whom she had many, blessed Lord, what a parent ! Was it possible for them not to love one another, with such a pattern before them, and with such instructions as she gave them ? For they too were deprived of their father, while the greater part were very young. Her instructions were pious and wise : but it was her example, it

was

was that ineffable charm of humble worth and modest dignity, of maternal complacence and mildness almost unparalleled, which rendered them irresistible, and diffused amongst all about her the spirit of amity, and the smile of happiness. You will not be surpris'd if I subjoin, that there were many other families who shared in her labours of love, and among the rest a very large one, the poor; whose blessings attended her through life, and whose tears followed her to the grave: for, when she died, they had also lost a mother. It is hard to say upon the whole, whether she was most beloved, or venerated, by those who knew her. But I used to think that, where-ever she appeared, her presence inspired sensations somewhat like those we should probably feel, if we beheld a good angel.

AND thus I come naturally to speak of Good Works in a comprehensive view; that is, those which proceed from kindness and compassion in general. When such dispositions predominate, let it be observed, in the first place, that they are ingenious to discover, and diligent to improve, those ways and means of beneficence, which pass unregarded by the giddy and unfeeling. Many of you, my honoured audience, have it not in your power, through the obscurity of your situation, and the straitness of your circumstances, to indulge the generous propen-

S E R M O N XI. 115

propensions of your nature. While thousands of your sex are inflamed with the emulation of beauty, or agitated by the conflict of rivalry, or miserable because they cannot be gratified with such an article of show, or admitted into such a party of pleasure ; you are sighing, because not able more extensively to succour indigence, or more effectually to comfort sorrow. Your sighs, beloved, are heard in heaven ; your wishes are registered there under the head of Virtues ; the willing mind is accepted now, and shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just ; your least good deed shall not be forgotten by him, who marked and applauded the widow's mite. " Whosoever shall give to drink" unto a follower of Jesus, " a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." You shall be estimated by the largeness of your hearts, not by the size of your fortunes. " The liberal soul, that deviseth liberal things," that executes what it can, and stops only where it must, or rather goes on panting and praying for that happiness to the human race, which it cannot have the joy of imparting ;—how honourable in the sight of God !

LET me remind you farther of what ought also to solace you amidst all your kind cares. Human happiness is made up of many little ingre-

116 S E R M O N XI.

ingredients, with a few principal ones ; and next to religion, those People in reality contribute to it most largely, who give the greatest consolation by their sympathy, and the greatest pleasure by their friendship. Friendship and sympathy, when thoroughly awake, are constantly employed in numberless pleasing services, and amiable attentions, to which language cannot appropriate names ; but which the heart of the person obliged feels, and which rebounds with redoubled delight on the heart of the person obliging. I go farther, and say, that the very idea of your being disposed to oblige is obligation ; because it is in itself agreeable, and we are indebted to every one that supplies us with an agreeable idea.

AND then who has not remarked, that in doing benevolent things there is, both as to the time and the manner, a propriety which gives inestimable value even to the least ? The manner, in particular, is of marvellous effect. A charitable action gracefully done is twice done. To some people one would be willing to owe almost every thing, so handsomely do they confer a kindness ; while from others a favour, for the opposite reason, is a load. But who so capable of delighting by the manner, yet more than by the deed itself, as a lovely young woman, whose words, and smiles, and softness, are, to the last of these, what a

beau-

S E R M O N XI. 117

beautiful symphony and judicious accompaniment in music are to a well managed voice?

BUT, in truth, the advantages which your sex and age afford you in this divine employment of doing good, are not to be expressed. Would to God your zeal were but in proportion to it!—Forgive me, Protestants, if on this occasion I here remark with concern, how far many of you are outdone by multitudes in the Church of Rome, especially amongst her female votaries. Their frequent visits to the abodes of misfortune and pain, of poverty and sickness, their gentle ministrations to the sufferers, their stooping so meekly to the meanest offices of compassion, offices of which the most distant thought would shock the false refinement of a gay lady, place them I must own to me, amidst all the errors of their faith, in a point of light highly respectable and engaging. Who can help me to a reason, why a practice so Christ-like is not adopted in this country, where the gospel is professed in so much purity? Are we afraid of being thought to embrace the doctrine of Merit by good works, entertained in that church? It cannot be, amongst those who have learned the truth as it is in Jesus. None surely was ever more self-denied on this head than St. Paul; yet St. Paul was a flame of charity. In his doctrine, and in his conduct, grace and virtue, faith and good works, went hand in hand, inseparable and triumphant.

AH,

AH, ye fair ones of Britain, who doat on the parade of public assemblies, and sail along in the full blown pride of fashionable attire, of which the least appendage or circumstance must not be discomposed; thoughtless of human woe; insensible to modest worth at that moment pining in many a solitary residence of want—What shall I say more? Ye gaudy flutterers, “with hard hearts under soft raiment,” as one has well expressed it; how much more brilliant and beautiful would you appear in the sight of saints and angels, were you now and then to exchange those scenes of selfish splendor for the gloomy dwellings of wretchedness, in order to light them up by your pity and beneficence! I blush for many of my countrywomen, possessed of fortune, who have never yet learnt its noblest and happiest use; in whose ears the circulated whisper of a well-dressed crowd admiring their appearance, is a more grateful sound than the praise of widows and orphans sharing their bounty; who prefer the empty breath of adulation to the blessings of them that were ready to perish.

GOD be thanked, there are exceptions. Among the rest I recollect, with peculiar pleasure, one lady of rank, whose name is never mentioned by those who know her, without calling up the image of Charity; who, having no family of her own, has adopted the indigent

indigent and deserving; whose whole life, not a short one, has been devoted to munificence; who, in a word, seems to regard her wealth merely as a fund deposited in her hands by the Almighty, to be laid out with the strictest faithfulness for the god-like purpose of making thousands happy. Exalted creature! how honourable, independant of thy birth; how blessed, to understand so well the destination of riches! A rare, and, as it should seem from this circumstance, a difficult science!—Justly might the poet exclaim,

“ The rich must labour to possess their own,
 “ To feel their great abundance; and request
 “ Their humble friends to help them to be
 “ blest;
 “ To see their treasures, hear their glory
 “ told,
 “ And aid the wretched impotence of gold.”

He adds indeed,

“ But some, great souls! and touch’d with
 “ warmth divine,
 “ Give gold a price, and teach its beams to
 “ shine.
 “ All hoarded treasures they repute a load;
 “ Nor think their wealth their own, till well
 “ bestow’d.”

AMONGST

AMONGST the properties of the Virtuous Woman, in that celebrated passage formerly surveyed, it is said, “ She stretcheth forth
 “ her hand to the poor, and reacheth her
 “ hand to the needy:” On which it has been remarked, that after her industry for the acquiring of wealth is described, her liberality is next mentioned, as being the principal use she made of it, and precedes her providing scarlet for her household, or fine linen and purple for herself.—What shall we call those women, who either never think of the poor at all, or never till they have first sacrificed to superfluity and pride?

WHERE are those female penitents of this land, that, like her of Judea, convert the instruments of their former folly and extravagance into matter of humiliation and piety; that consecrate, so to speak, the spoils of Vice, by offering them at the feet of their Saviour, while they prostrate themselves there in deep contrition? The poor they have always with them, and by shewing mercy to them, they may at once shew their respect for him, and help to ensure mercy for themselves.

IT is worthy your observation, that in the list of female names recorded in scripture with renown, that of Tabitha stands marked with a particular note of approbation, as “ a disciple
 “ who

“ who was full of Good Works, and Alms
 “ which she did.” What a glorious memorial! And what an additional honour does it receive from the account immediately following! This excellent woman dies. An Apostle is in the neighbourhood. He is sent for in haste; he arrives; he is conducted to the chamber of the deceased. Her female friends stand by him “ weeping, and shewing him the
 “ coats and garments which she had made” for the poor. How natural a circumstance; and how eloquent! He felt it; “ kneeled down
 “ and prayed, and turning him to the body,
 “ said,” with a voice of power, “ Tabitha, arise;” working a miracle to restore a life so useful. From this amiable person’s being denominated in the history a Disciple, I would only remark, that in those days a Christian was known and characterized by real excellence: whereas every thing now is a Christian, not excepting her who never, but when forced, went into the house of mourning; never knew the joy of giving purely for the love of God, without expecting any thing again; let me add, never denied herself one trapping of Vanity to clothe the naked, nor one indulgence of Luxury to feed the hungry.—Alas! my poor friend, what wilt thou say for thyself at the tribunal of Jesus? I leave with thee that question: answer it to thy conscience, as in the presence of thy
 VOL. II. G judge.

judge. You have read the process which he will observe.

ON these points it were easy to enlarge at great length, and with exact method. I am willing however to hope that, by the grace of God, a few hints thus thrown out with plainness and affection, may suffice to every mind that is open to the sentiments of humanity; but especially to every heart that is impressed with the principles of religion. And here I am led to

My last point, which was to shew in what manner those Principles may be cultivated with most success. It is difficult to say, whether the instrumental duties of religion, as they are usually termed, have been more misrepresented by superstition and hypocrisy on one hand, or by vicious refinement and vain philosophy on the other. By the former they have been extolled, as if they were the whole of religion; while the latter have decried them as vulgar, unavailing, and insignificant. The real truth is, that they are not only a part of religion, but an essential and important part of it; essential, as expressing its several affections, and important, as nourishing and maintaining them; essential, as a direct compliance with the divine authority, and important, as rendering such compliance more ready and habitual.

HABITS,

HABITS, we all know, are formed by many reiterated acts; and if these are discontinued, those will in time be lost. As good impressions are at first produced by proper attention, so, if this is suspended, they will soon fade from the mind; and the sooner, no doubt, as many of them at least were produced there in opposition to appetite, fashion, and the maxims of the world. Even friendship itself, which has originally so powerful a hold of the human heart, is not to be preserved alive, without the interchange of words and actions, if the parties are near; or that commerce of thoughts and wishes, if they are not, to which it naturally inclines. What could you expect from him, who should profess to entertain an affection for you, and yet testify no desire of your company, take no delight in your conversation, or, if absent, never inquire after you? Religion is a Divine Friendship, to be begun and continued nearly in the same manner with that which is Human; making allowance still for the infinite disparity between the Creator and the creature, between the Sovereign Spirit all pure and perfect, and a dependant mind embodied and frail.

IN cultivating a friendship which you wished to be sincere and lasting, you would often

ten step aside from the crowd to enjoy the freedom of undisturbed converse; you would lay open your heart with confidence to the object beloved, listen to each communication with pleasure, enter more and more into the same conceptions, exchange every possible mark of esteem, and, in the end, establish an union of interests and of souls alike close and tender. Now here we have some resemblance of private devotion. It is not my design to pursue this resemblance through its several parts; neither do I pretend to say, that it holds minutely in every one of them: but the general ground is clear to her who believes in an omnipresent Deity, and knows that between minds there may be an intercourse independent of the senses. The application can only be learnt by practice, and much practice too.]

It will not be learnt by those who have no relish for retirement. The Almighty's voice must be often attended to in the silence of the passions, and the secrecy of the soul. Those are yet strangers to their Maker, who cannot endure to think of him, or do not love to turn to him, when alone. Is the reverse of this your case, my dear hearer? Are your meditations of God sweet? Does your heart go out after him, as its best and greatest object? Is it your joy to pour it forth

into his paternal bosom? Do you frequently find the exercise so delightful, as to quit it with unwillingness? Do you generally perceive your sentiments raised and refined by it, your ideas of your duty quickened and enlarged, your detestation of the contrary confirmed and heightened, your resolutions invigorated of course, your gratitude, humility, meekness, resignation, and good affections of every kind, improved? Then are you a true worshipper. These are some of the genuine workings of piety.

I ENQUIRE not, whether they be the result of longer or shorter prayers, of studied forms, or extempore address, of more or fewer stated seasons for such offices. In these particulars different minds require a diversity, or a different education occasions it. But she, I suppose, will be the greatest proficient in the Spirit of Prayer, who is at the greatest pains to be so; I do not mean in the way of science or art, but in that of earnestness and perseverance.

BESIDES the regular, invariable, and solemn performance of your morning and evening devotions, it would be well if now and then, especially on the day of sacred rest, you took repeated opportunities of entering into your closet, shutting your door, and praying

to your father who sees in secret ; according as you found yourself in a happier disposition for such employment, or were prompted to it by some peculiar occurrences in your situation, or exigencies in your soul. And if at certain times of the year, pointed out by religious custom, or fixed upon by personal choice, you were to consecrate a whole day to holy retreat and devotional exercises, joined with prudent fasting, I am persuaded, you would find it as highly beneficial in your own practice, as it comes strongly recommended by the experience of the saints.

If you might be advised by me, you should in prayer neither trust wholly to your single fund of thought and expression, supposing it even rich and various, nor confine yourself entirely to forms, by whatever man or set of men composed ; but use sometimes one, sometimes the other, and sometimes a mixture of both, just as the attraction of your mind seems to lead at the moment, or as any of these methods may on trial be attended with most satisfaction and advantage. In effect, I am convinced that of those who, in this kind of commerce, limit themselves to their own unassisted stock, the greater part will often, particularly in circumstances of bad health, or spiritual dryness, be reduced to such straits as must produce a poverty of devotion which they

they could not suffer, did they proceed on a larger foundation. On the other hand, I cannot conceive, that, even amongst those who are most devoted to forms, any sincere worshipper should not by the swelling of sentiment, and the current of devotion, be frequently carried away into a freer and fuller effusion of the heart.

As to the length of those duties, I would only say, that you must be governed by your condition both outward and inward; that you are to avoid every thing careless, or formal, whether with or without pre-conceived words; that little intermissions are often extremely useful to relieve the mind, and fit it for a new exertion of its powers; but that on the other side, by praying in continuity, the soul is often warmed into life and energy, till that exercise which was begun with languor is concluded with affection.

WHEN I speak of affection, let me warn you not to mistake the effervescence of fancy for the spirit of devotion. They are two things widely different. "By their fruits ye shall know them." The fluency, tears, and rapture, produced by the first, are mechanical, superficial, and ineffective; engendering only the confidence of Enthusiasm, or wasting themselves in the scrupulosity of Superstition. The last,

last, though frequently accompanied with fluency, tears, and rapture, at least in minds of much sensibility, is yet often not so ; but then it leaves the heart better, however this may not be discerned immediately. She who sometimes perhaps, like the self-abased publican, is able only to sigh out “ God be merciful to me “ a sinner,” may in that all-seeing eye be as acceptable as the eloquent petitioner that ever addressed the throne of heaven. We read of the “ spirit’s helping our infirmities” in this very exercise, “ and making intercession for “ us with groanings that cannot be uttered.”

MENTAL prayer, and silent ejaculation, I will not now consider. They are the attainments of persons far advanced in devotion. By pursuing the track I point out, you may hope to reach them in one degree or another; and some experience in them will lead you to more. Those who can abstract and concentrate their minds, so as readily to place themselves in the presence of God, wherever they are, and to converse with him even in a crowd, whether by continued contemplation, or by sudden dartings of pious affection towards him on the point of a vigorous thought, certainly possess a very noble secret, fruitful alike of edification and enjoyment; such as too renders them much less dependant on the accidents of their situation, since let their business or other engagements

engagements be what they will, they may be still with God, calm, self-possessed, and happily disposed to “pray always:” a state of spiritual life, which there is reason to fear is known by few.

THERE is a kind of middle practice, which is probably less uncommon, as it is certainly more easy; that of praying with a repressed voice, or one not in the least audible to a second person, while yet the words are distinctly and deliberately spoken by the worshipper, who, by such means, preserves his ideas from dissipation, and impresses them more deeply on his own heart. I said Deliberately; because in this as well as in every other method of prayer, hurry and precipitation are utterly incompatible with the spirit of devotion.

Of even the strongest and most retired minds it may, I believe, be affirmed, that they never think at all, on whatever occasion, without the secret or internal use of language, although they seldom attend to it. Be that as it may, I am satisfied that vocal prayer, whether more or less articulate, will be found, in general, by far the most proportioned to the human, and particularly to the female faculties. Of the manner last mentioned we have a remarkable example in the mother of Samuel. It is a beautiful passage, strongly expressive of the workings of a devout but sorrowful spirit, and at the same time of the

power of devotion to turn sorrow and sighing into joy and praise.

ONE thing we may boldly pronounce, as a maxim which will never fail; that she has worshipped to purpose, in whatever mode she has worshipped, who comes away improved, or established in worthy dispositions, whether these are attended with much emotion, or with none, with much delight, or with little, at the time. This remark I judged peculiarly necessary here, considering how easily you, my young friends, may be misled on this subject by that ardour of passion, and that vivacity of fancy, which are so natural to you; and which, wherever devotion is concerned, are so prone to assume its name, when, at the very best, they can only aid its flights.

ON the same principle, I would caution you not to lose yourselves in generalities; which, however they may chance to engage the understanding, or entertain the imagination, seldom or ever touch the conscience, or interest the heart. In conversing with a virtuous and intimate friend, you would choose certainly to dwell on those matters that affected you most nearly, or to throw out those reflexions that most readily occurred. In this higher correspondence you should do the same; only with more solemnity, and greater abstraction from secular objects.

NOTHING

NOTHING can be more erroneous than the common opinion, that the several parts of prayer, as they are usually termed, ought to enter into every longer act of devotion. What is this, but to reduce into a mere trial of skill, or to restrain within the mere trammels of a system, and thereby degrade to a laborious and jejune piece of formality, that which ought to be free and unaffected, natural and noble?—

‘ I am going into the company of a bosom-
 ‘ friend. Let me settle before-hand the whole
 ‘ plan of our conversation; that I may be sure
 ‘ to introduce such and such topics, in order
 ‘ to discuss them severally one after another,
 ‘ at full length, and with due connexion.’—

He who should talk in this manner would betray, methinks, very little acquaintance with the spirit of friendship. In that, my sisters, and in true devotion, there is nothing, believe me, artificial, nicely managed, or elaborately studied. Esteem, sentiment, confidence, a sympathy of soul, and the overflowings of the heart, are all in all, I think not of the public offices of religion, where, in those who lead them, more regularity and accuracy are no doubt required.

ON the whole, when you address the seat of mercy, you ought to speak what you feel most strongly at that particular season; to follow without scruple the inward attraction before

fore mentioned ; to insist on those things of a spiritual nature, that are then attended with the greatest relish ; to continue your attention to them calmly, but fixedly, while that relish remains ; then to pass on, if time and other circumstances permit, to something else, still without any agitation, or violent effort, nor deeming it necessary to follow out this new track, should another present itself that seems more promising, or that lies more parallel to the course of your thoughts on the occasion ; chiefly concerned to keep alive a sense of that great presence in which you are, of those wants and weaknesses under which you labour, of what you owe to others as well as to yourselves, and of that divinely efficacious intercession, through which alone you wish and hope to be heard and accepted.

A COMPOSED, affectionate, and steady attention to these, and such like rules (for I cannot now enter into the full detail) will, if I am not greatly mistaken, prove one effectual means of cultivating the life and power of religion within you. I need not add, what you have been told times without number, and what your own hearts cannot on the least reflexion fail to repeat ; that no prayers can be effectual for this, or any one good purpose, which are not accompanied with a correspondent watchfulness, and faithful discharge of every other duty.

BUT

BUT it may be necessary to subjoin, that the practice of devotion, now recommended, cannot take place without much preparation from time to time; of which one well-known part is the Reading of the Scriptures. On this a very few observations shall suffice.

FOR acquiring what is generally stiled Religious Knowledge, reading the scriptures throughout, and often large portions at a time, may be perfectly proper. For improving in that which those scriptures speak of chiefly under this denomination, I mean a practical and vital sense of things divine and everlasting, a different method, as I conceive, should be followed.

SHORT and select passages from both Testaments, but especially the New, and more particularly from the history and sermons of our Saviour, should be perused and pondered at leisure, first without any commentary at all, and so indeed for the most part, except where there is a manifest difficulty; in doing which, you should with awful reverence and child-like simplicity lay your minds open to the native impressions of the truth, and to the secret teachings of its Author. When, in this way, you meet with one or more verses, that strike you with peculiar conviction or delight; close the book, revolve them again and again,

look

look up to heaven, and implore the Father of Spirits to write their meaning on your hearts, as “with the point of a diamond.” Read nothing more at that time, nothing at least that has not a near relation to the ideas and affections they excite. Give these an easy unstudied vent in prayer. The pleasure and the benefit will be unspeakable. Only suffer not the tincture thereby left upon you, to be lost in the succeeding scenes. Next morning review the same passage; endeavour to recal the same sentiments, and with your pencil mark it for your future benefit.

A YOUNG lady formerly of my acquaintance, who is now reading the character and will of her Creator in the light of the beatific vision, used daily to follow this practice. Her Bible was infinitely prized by her; whatever was most excellent in it, she had thought and weighed all over. Its sacred contents were engraven on her soul; or rather her soul was delivered into the mould of it. She lived in innocence, and died in triumph.

Is it necessary, my beloved disciples, that I should urge you to the study of a book which, while it tends to make you wise to salvation, is calculated also to convey the most affecting views, and awaken the sublimest sensibilities, on a thousand topics? A book it certainly is, full of entertainment as well as instruction,
com-

composed by a great diversity of authors, and all of them divinely taught. I think I see them, one after another, presenting for your improvement their respective writings, with an aspect of dignity and sweetness combined, the dignity of truth, and the sweetness of benevolence; both derived from him, who inspired them to be the teachers of mankind, and who, in order to gain them the more belief and veneration, invested many of them with a command over Nature, and a knowledge of Futurity, which none but the God of Nature, and the Spirit of Omniscience could impart. I think I hear them severally addressing you, in the name of God, with an authority that can only be equalled by their mildness, on subjects the grandest and most important, in a happy variety of styles, amidst an uniformity of sentiments, and an agreement in facts, which, the multiplicity of them considered, must ever appear truly admirable! What shall I say more? —I will not desire you to read this book called the Bible, if you can shew me another containing so much to inform, impress, and delight reflecting minds, laid together in a manner so extensively adapted to their various turns of understanding, taste, and temper; which people of different and distant countries, through a long succession of ages, have held in so much reverence, and read with so much advantage; where it is so difficult to determine, which are most distinguished, ease and
simpli-

136 S E R M O N XI.

simplicity, or sublimity and force, but where all are so beautifully united; where there is so little to discourage the weakest spirit if docile, and so much to gratify the strongest if candid; where the fancy and the heart, the intellect and the conscience, are applied to by turns with such familiarity, and yet such majesty; in fine, where the frailties, disorders, and distresses of human nature, are all so feelingly laid open, and the remedies which Heaven has provided so tenderly applied. But to proceed.

OF books in Divinity I do not wish you to read very many. Those in the way of Religious Controversy, as it is called, but which are frequently written in a most irreligious spirit, that is, without any candour or fairness, I do not wish you to read at all. Mere argumentative theology I have never known to improve the temper, or regulate the conduct; but often to hurt both. Happily for you indeed, the female taste very seldom lies in that way; never, I think, where there is female sweetness. By a good Providence you have been taught "the truth as it is in Jesus." Be it your ambition to practise, not to dispute about it. Enjoy your faith in modest silence, and think well of those who differ from you in opinions, if they agree in morals; but learn to despise the futility, while you discour-

rage

S E R M O N XI. 137

rage the impudence, of such as would pretend to talk you out of your religion. Be assured they are often empty, and always worthless. If they attempt it in the style of banter, they offer you an affront. If they affect to seem in earnest, to be sorry for your prejudices, and solicitous to remove them by conversation, and by books which they are ready to lend you; a hundred to one, but they are actuated by the worst designs. Fly them, my fair pupils, fly them with horror, as tempters and ravagers at the same instant.

By making conscience of sincerely obeying the precepts of the gospel, while you meekly embrace its doctrines, as they appear to you set forth in the scriptures, you will have the witness of its divinity within yourselves. From thence you will be disposed to choose and adhere to those writers, of whatever communion, that are calculated to make you most in love with your Saviour and your duty. The formal and frigid you will naturally dislike; the uncharitable and illiberal you will nobly detest; the trifling and superficial you will very easily condemn. Those books, how well soever recommended, that even in your gravest hours do not attract and persuade you, (I now suppose you pious) you will readily perceive are not the books for you. Such as do both in a greater or less degree, it is apparent, are

are adapted to your cast of mind. Those, in short, will be your favourite authors, whether in verse or prose, whom you find most frequently new and interesting; who present the most pathetic pictures of this world and the next; who tell you most convincingly what you are, and what you ought to be; who seem, in a word, to address themselves with the greatest power to the spirit of ingenuity, humility, contrition, self-denial, solid virtue, and affectionate devotion.

I TAKE it for granted you attend on the Public Institutions of religion. The superior regularity of your sex in this respect the men, to say the truth, shew very little inclination to dispute. May the women take care to convince them, that it is something more than mere regularity! In the mean time I am sure, they who perform their first duties, are much more likely to perform their second also, than they who do not.

LET your attendance be more than what the world calls decent: let it be punctual. She that becomes deficient in such punctuality, will soon become indifferent about the whole. Having omitted her duty unnecessarily once, a second, and a third time, she will omit it the fourth with less compunction; and ere long will be ready to neglect it without any.

It

It is wonderful, how soon a sense of futurity dies from the soul. Have you ever known it to live, where the Sabbath grew into contempt? What multitudes have been forced to date their ruin from thence?

BUT not to speak of the openly profane, do those sanctify the sabbath to whom it is not a delight, who visit the house of God without preparation and worship there without devotion? What shall we say of many a young woman who passes for good and pious, although she cannot for an hour together behave with sedateness, or composure, in the immediate presence of the Most High? That mind must be volatile indeed, which the solemnities of a Christian assembly cannot fix for a little.—Do we wish you then to disfigure your faces like the Pharisees, to hang your heads like a bulrush, or to practise religious grimace of any kind? No. Is even the gravest look, or most recollected manner, a certain sign of piety? It is not: and yet will you say, that such a look and manner are of no importance on such an occasion; that they are not naturally suited to it; or that the spirit of piety may very probably dwell in her heart, whose countenance and carriage even on that occasion do not bear the marks of it, who even then cannot restrain the rolling eye, forget the conscious air, or leave the fluttering demeanour?

BELIEVE

BELIEVE me, Ladies, a different behaviour would appear much more becoming. Men of sense and sobriety would entertain a much better opinion of your principles; nor would it be any disadvantage to your persons. Never perhaps does a fine woman strike more deeply, than when composed into pious recollection, and possessed with the noblest considerations, she assumes, without knowing it, superior dignity and new graces; so that the beauties of holiness seem to radiate about her, and the bystanders are almost induced to fancy her already worshipping amongst her kindred angels.

BUT to return to the point immediately before us; I say, that the habit of seriousness and devotion in church, will produce very desirable effects on your temper and conduct out of it. By beginning the week well, you will retain through the remainder a certain impression of goodness, that will follow you every where; at the same time that, by such avowed testimonies of respect for your Maker and Saviour, you will ensure the continuance of the divine benediction and assistance.

THE great advantages arising from a diligent attention to the Preaching of the word, and also from an early, frequent and devout participation of the Lord's supper, I will not now enter upon. They are abundantly obvious, and

and have been frequently enforced. But I cannot quit the subject of the sabbath without observing, that to those, who join in the public services of that day, its utility is often totally defeated by their resigning the evening to company and recreation; the general tendency of these being to efface any serious impressions made in the preceding part of it. For such a practice, you my fair charge, who have commonly so much leisure upon your hands, cannot plead the least excuse.

VERY hard it is, if those who give so many other evenings to amusement, cannot find in their heart to give this or a part of it to God. But, alas! it is that very passion for amusement, which prevents or dulls the taste for devotion. To her indeed, who will not be persuaded to rescue so small a portion of her time from the gaieties of the world for the purposes of her salvation, we cannot hope to say any thing that will be of use. She who cannot enjoy the company of her Creator for an hour or two, remote from all other company, was never initiated into the mysteries of divine friendship: she is yet in her sins, “alienated from the life of God, dead while she lives; in a spiritual sense dead, alive only to animal nature and the tumultuous dreams of a distempered mind; in short, a poor giddy worthless creature, incapable of whatever is wise or happy.

Oh!

- “ Oh! lost to virtue, lost to sober thought,
“ Lost to the noble sallies of the soul,
“ Who think it solitude, to be alone.
“ Communion sweet! communion large and
 high!
“ Our reason, guardian angel, and our God!
“ Then nearest these, when others most remote;
“ And all ere long shall be remote but these.
“ How dreadful then to meet them all alone,
“ A stranger, unacknowledg'd, un approv'd!”

I TREMBLE at the thought. Nor will it avail you, in this case, to plead even the utmost exactness and constancy in your attendance on the sanctuary. That alone will prove nothing. Entertainment may still be the idol which you worship, and worship even in the temple of Jehovah. If you say it is not, let us bring you to the test. When you return home from the house of God, can you retire with pleasure to your closets, impose silence on your fancies, command your passions to be still, exclude every thought of dress and diversion, company and admiration; review what you have been doing, recal what you have heard, make application if it admits of any (there are few discourses that admit not of some;) and then casting yourselves down at the footstool of the throne of God, pour out your hearts before him, confess with simplicity
and

and sorrow your sins and corruptions, implore the grace of repentance and remission for what is past, of discernment to know your duty for the future, and of fortitude to do it, forming at the same time unfeigned resolutions to that purpose; joining to the whole the adoration of the divine attributes, as they successively or jointly rise to your view; and, finally, throwing yourselves on the divine mercy through Christ Jesus?—Can you do this? Is it your favourite and habitual employment, in the evening of that day which God has made for himself? To her who can honestly answer in the affirmative, I will acknowledge freely that, next to the daily tenor of a conduct uniformly Christian, she gives one of the best proofs of sincerity in her religious profession; nor is there any thing excellent in that, which I should not expect from a practice so wise and pious. But what is to be expected of those who know nothing of this? Or what can be said of their intentions in going to church, who the moment they leave it leave every reflexion which it ought to have imprinted, and resolve to think of religion no more that day, than if they had not heard or mentioned a syllable relating to it? St. James will inform you whom they are like. They are “like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself and goeth his way, and straightways forgetteth what manner of man he was.”—Do men then so readily lose the
image

image of themselves? No; but the Apostle must be understood to speak of some thoughtless creature, who, on looking accidentally into a glass, and observing certain spots or stains in his face, which he ought instantly to wipe off, turns away in haste without availing himself of the discovery, and, in the pursuit of other objects, entirely neglects a circumstance that demanded his immediate attention. I leave you to apply the remark, and only add in general, that the closet must enforce what the pulpit has suggested; that as, like Lydia, you should attend diligently to the things which are spoken in the name of God, so, like Mary, you should keep and ponder them in your hearts; and that as Jesus himself, dismissing the multitudes together with his disciples, ‘went up into a mountain apart “to pray,”’ so you, disengaging yourselves from the interruption of a crowd, and the company even of your most intimate connexions, should step aside, more particularly at the season in question, to converse with his Father and your Father, with his God and your God.

THINK not from any thing I have said, that I want to subject you to the rules of Jewish rigour, under the mild dispensation of the Gospel. What I propose will render the Christian sabbath no less pleasant than improving. Nor do I mean to preclude on that day the cheerful

cheerful reciprocations of holy friendship; which they that have a taste for them will very easily distinguish from the unseasonable pastimes and promiscuous visitings, in which many fine ladies of the present age pass the Sunday evenings.

THUS I am brought to say something of Religious Conversation. An attempt to discuss so important a topic would carry me too far. To manage religious conversation with propriety and advantage, is for the most part an affair of great delicacy. In the more retired intercourse of congenial minds, well taught and well furnished, it may not be difficult. But such, I fear, are not often found; and even where such have the happiness to meet, grave discourse will require to be frequently varied, relieved, and suspended, in order to keep up its relish.

MUCH sentiment is apt to overwhelm. The soul quickly seeks relaxation. The bow cannot be long bent without having its elasticity impaired. In general company, subjects of devotion and morality would, as the world goes, be utterly improper. Good Lord! to what is this generation sunk, that even amongst characters otherwise decent a man can seldom or ever introduce a solemn reflexion, without incurring the imputation of cant or impertinence? When shall it be the mode to converse like im-

mortal beings? Where is the fashionable circle now, in which a serious observation can be prudently hazarded, if not stolen upon them with art and insinuation? Neither is this a part for you to take upon yourselves.

FEMALE modesty is often silent; female decorum is never bold. Both forbid a young woman to lead the conversation; and true religion dreads every thing that might look ostentatious. The most prudent course you can pursue is to associate, as much as possible, with those that from real principle love the shade. With them you may safely unbosom yourselves on the best subjects, without the danger of ridicule, or the suspicion of affectation. When the children of wisdom assemble, out of the sight and din of folly; what improvement and felicity crown the scene! How delightfully do they then mingle souls! Nor does their parent disdain to sport with her offspring. I mean, that genuine piety knows how to blend recreation and smiles with sentiment and gravity.

HAVING mentioned Sentiment so often, I will now once for all offer you a caution, on which I lay a particular stress. It is this; not to mistake the capacity of thinking justly, or of talking well, for the same thing with a disposition to act wisely. The truth is, that people are not wise in consequence either of profound knowledge, or vast learning, or beautiful notions,

tions, or the most cultivated taste, or the greatest ability in displaying these; but by virtue of a few plain notions settled into principles of conduct; even as people are not healthy by feasting on rich dainties, or indulging a nice palate, but by living on simpler fare, where temperance does not wish for much variety, and where hunger does not want it.

NEVERTHELESS, there is not perhaps any thing that flatters the human mind more than depth or fluency of remark, than compass or facility of conversation. In effect, they are talents not often possessed, and such as confer a superiority felt by all, however it may be acknowledged by few. When it is acknowledged, such praise transports; and those who receive it set themselves down for every thing that is great and accomplished. Alas! they forget, that these are still at best but in the second class of excellence; that in a moral view they are of no value; and that fine discourse and a fine character are things totally distinct.

IN reality, your best talkers are very seldom your best liver. From their encomiums on virtue, and their declamations against vice, they receive often such high pleasure as with them passes for love of the one, and abhorrence of the other; when it is only perhaps a vain complacency in their own powers, joined to that natural sense of right and wrong, which is com-

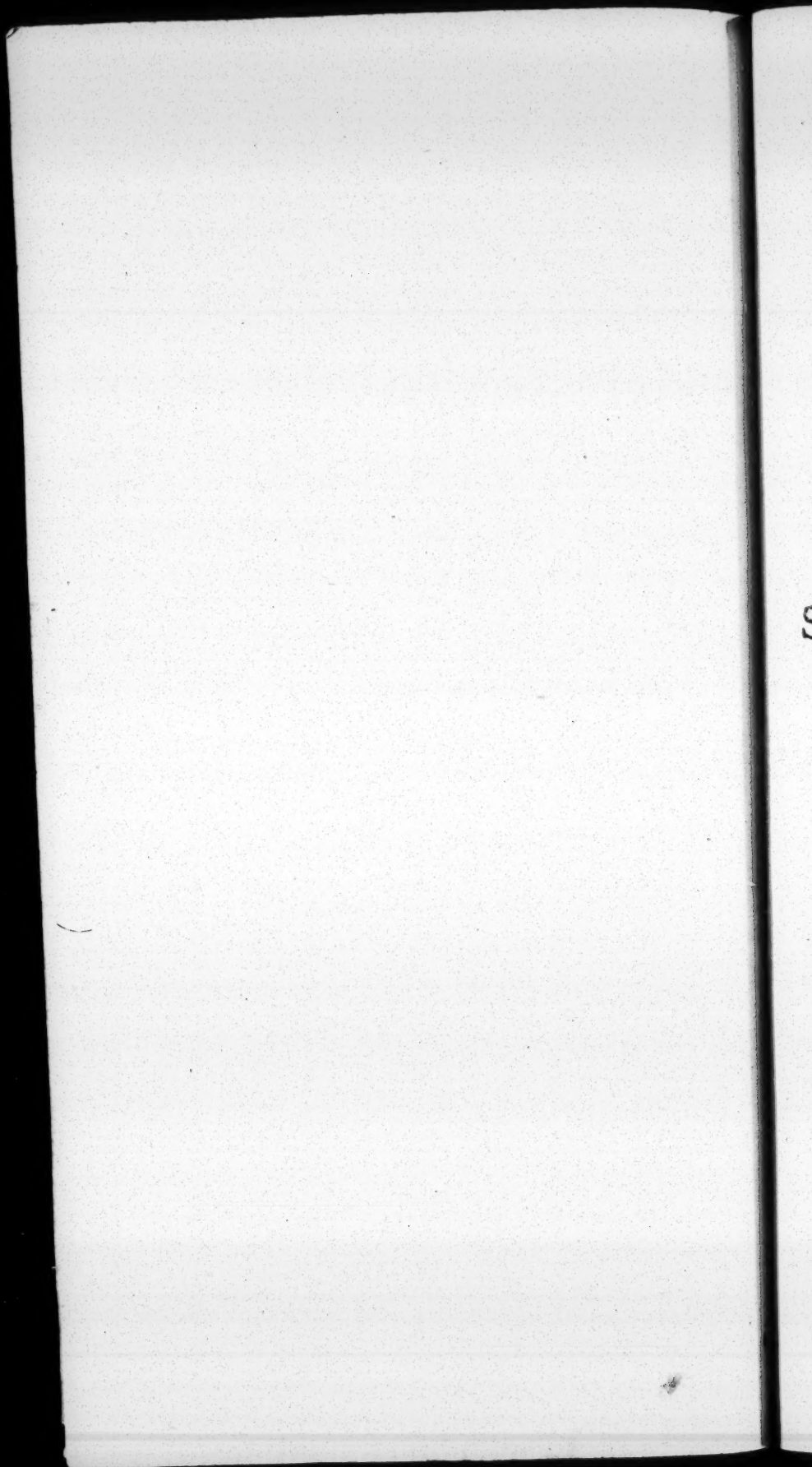
mon to them with all others. In this they rest, well satisfied to leave to others the less showy, and more troublesome part, which belongs to practice. To that also speculation is often an enemy, in the same manner as familiarity is to respect.

RELIGION, beloved, is a majestic form, always to be treated with reverence; with affection too, I confess, as being likewise an amiable form. But this affection resembles that which a wise subject would shew for his prince, into whose friendship he found himself graciously admitted. Such a man would never forget his own subordination so far, as to drop the reverence due to royalty. If his prince condescended to treat him with the openness of confidence, and the caresses of joy; yet still would he bear in mind, that he was only a subject, and every freedom on his side would be tempered with respectful modesty.

PERHAPS there is nothing so uncommon as to speak of divine objects with the proper veneration. How have I been shocked to hear the sanctimonious, yet audacious, prate of some pretenders to religion! Those that have the strongest perceptions of it, will be most struck by its sublimity, and most conscious how far they fall short of so high a standard. By consequence they will profess it with the greatest modesty, and mention it with the utmost

caution. Those that are most intimately acquainted with God and themselves, will be most deeply impressed with his grandeur and their own littleness, will most clearly perceive the difference between knowing his will and performing it, will feel most sensibly how much easier it is to descant on all his perfections than to copy one of them.

To conclude; let me beseech you, beyond all things, to converse much with your Maker and yourselves, to study his character and your own; to trace his attributes wherever displayed, to learn his counsels, however revealed; to examine your consciences, chiefly by the written word; to canvass your past actions, present pursuits, and prevailing views; to approve or condemn, as under his eye; to ascertain your interest in the friendship of your Divine Sovereign, and cherish an unalterable faith in his Spirit and Providence, as ever ready to assist your honest though feeble efforts; together with a joyful assurance, that, if you are not wilfully wanting to yourselves, you shall at last attain immortal excellence and glory, through Jesus Christ your Lord.



S E R M O N XII.

O N

FEMALE MEEKNESS.

WE

i

g

b

i

a

C

T

bee

bec

tha

wor

wit

ting

mal

ing

tinu

only

dire

car

long

" c

on

S E R M O N XII.

On Female Meekness.

I P E T. iii. 3, 4.

Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel: but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a Meek and Quiet Spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

THE Apostle of the Circumcision, like him of the Gentiles, seems to have been no stranger to female nature, or to what becomes it. Both were sufficiently aware, that ornament was a favourite object with women; and both were too well acquainted with the arts of persuasion to think of combating the general idea. It was the business to make the best use of such a handle. Accordingly, their converts of that sex might continue to study embellishment as much as ever; only those inspired teachers wished them to direct it right, by making that their chief care which was of the greatest value and the longest duration, namely, “the hidden man of the heart.” The doctrine of St. Paul on this point we have examined very fully.

That of St. Peter, now read, we propose for the ground-work of our concluding discourse, with a view to complete the plan which we have prosecuted thus far. We have reserved it for this place, as believing, that Meekness, cultivated on Christian principles, is the proper consummation, and highest finishing, of female excellence. The subject being so important, may I not hope to be still honoured with your attention?

I BEGIN with observing, that the virtue in question has its Foundation in the Softer Composition of the sex. That there is a sex in minds was hinted at before. This original distinction has never, I think, been better understood than by our great epic poet. As in his admired work of *Paradise Lost* he has with equal judgment and delicacy marked, throughout, the separate characters of the First Pair; so he has, in two lines, happily expressed the principal objects of their respective destinations:

“ For contemplation He, and valour form’d;
“ For softness She, and sweet attractive
 grace.”

THE virtue of meekness, it is true, our religion requires of all without exception. Moses is celebrated for it in an eminent degree; and

and our Saviour characterizes himself by the epithets Meek and Lowly. The disposition, in general, may be considered as Charity's first-born, appearing in all the mildest attitudes of forbearance, gentleness, and peace. But still in men, it may be often found connected with the greatest boldness, and most undaunted magnanimity. Much for the honour of true courage, it has been observed, that the bravest minds are commonly the most humane, generous, and forgiving. These several qualities are beautifully blended in many parts of the history of that man of God just now mentioned. Nor can you have forgotten the calm heroism of our divine Deliverer, together with that dignity of goodness which dwelt about him, in circumstances of the deepest humiliation and sorrow.

As for you, my fair pupils, we wish you no doubt to possess such fortitude as implies resolution, wherever your virtue, duty, or reputation, is concerned. But along with that we expect to find on other subjects, a timidity peculiar to your sex; and also a degree of complacency, yieldingness, and sweetness, beyond what we look for in men. Neither do we, so far as I know, ever rank amongst feminine qualities Valour, strictly so called. A woman heading an army, rushing into the thickest of the foe, spreading slaughter and death

death around her, or returning from the field of battle covered with dust and blood, would surely to a civilized nature suggest shocking ideas.

YOUR best emblem, beloved, is the smiling form of Peace, robed in white, and bearing a branch of olive. Like the Apostles and first Christians, your highest glory is to conquer by benignity, and triumph by patience. Roughness, and even ferociousness, in a man, we often overlook, and are sometimes diverted with. In a woman, we are always hurt by them. A loud voice, a bold gesture, a daring countenance, in short, every mark of bravery shall please in the former, when his courage is particularly called forth: but in a female we wish nothing to reign but love and tenderness; and where they do reign, they will produce very different effects.

No, my friends, you were not made for scenes of danger and opposition. I must repeat it, that fearfulness to a certain degree becomes you; not that cowardice, which many of you shew, and some of you affect, on every trifling occasion, and frequently without any occasion at all. Such behaviour in you is childish, and to us uninteresting; if not an object of contempt. But a worthy woman, shrinking from manifest hazard, or threatened

threatened violence, we are always forward and proud to protect ; while on the other hand, an intrepid female seems to renounce our aid, and in some respect to invade our province. We turn away, and leave her to herself.

LET it be likewise observed, that in your sex manly exercises are never graceful ; that in them a tone and figure, as well as an air and deportment, of the masculine kind, are always forbidden ; and that men of sensibility desire in every woman soft features, and a flowing voice, a form not robust, and a demeanour delicate and gentle. These indeed are considered as alike requisite and natural ; I mean, where there is any taste for elegance. I am even inclined to believe that, supposing other circumstances equal, the coarsest clown would be better pleased with them than with their opposites.

YET farther, the aptitude observable, in all the better kind of women, to commiserate and comfort, to melt into tears at the sight or hearing of distress, to take the care of children, to play and to prattle with those pretty innocents, to mingle in all the mild sympathies and tender charities of life ; the wonderful dexterity with which they disarm fierceness, and appease wrath ; the powerful eloquence they display in assuaging the cares, and calming the sorrows,

sorrows, of those men with whom they are connected; their strong propensity to an union of hearts, and their unutterable fondness where it takes place;—these lovely peculiarities in their temperament, these finer tunings of their minds, seem additional proofs, that softness is your proper attribute. Womanish Softness, as it is styled, has never been imputed to any man by way of reproach, without a tacit acknowledgment of this truth in your favour. In the male composition, it is certainly a blemish wherever found; in the female, a beauty.

FROM these remarks, I think it appears, that the basis of the virtue we now recommend is laid in the original make, or specific character of the sex. The Superstructure which Christianity raises upon it, or, in other words, the improvements it receives from religious principle, shall be our next consideration.

THE Gospel is, in truth, the religion of human nature; building charity and all virtue on whatever is kind, ingenuous, or praiseworthy in that; correcting its disorders, mitigating its distresses, supporting its weaknesses, and from each educing good, by turning them into matter of humility and circumspection, of faith and resignation, of docility and meekness.

ness. These are all connected together; but the first and last are nearly allied. They are twin-sisters. Humility is ever disposed to serve; and she affords the other singular assistance.

THEY that have a just sense of their own infirmities and failings, will be naturally of an unpretending, a forbearing, and forgiving temper. The reverse of this is the genuine offspring of Pride. A proud character was never a meek one; whereas there is no act of kindness, no instance of condescension, which the self-diffident are not ready to perform. They enter thoroughly into the spirit of those precepts that require Christians to “be courteous, to condescend to men of low estate, and in honour to prefer one another.”

PICTURE in your own minds a young lady, lively, agreeable, carested; as yet unacquainted with her Maker, with herself, and with the claims which society has on every reasonable being that is sent into life. The magic power of Fancy, set to work by vanity, ambition, and hope, creates a kind of world within, to which she fondly refers that without, as always subordinate, and chiefly subservient. In this little empire “she sits as a queen, and faith in her heart, I shall see no sorrow,” and dreams of conquest and triumph,
of

of splendid houses and shining equipages, of passionate lovers and disappointed rivals, with nameless enchanting visions more, which may never be realized, but which she regards as the most certain realities; so certain, that he who should attempt to undeceive her would run the risk of being hated as her greatest enemy. This world of phantoms, it is true, is always fluctuating: the gay and the gloomy succeed by turns. But in each our conceited fair one is still the principal figure; and the value of every thing is measured, according as it contributes to her importance and elevation. Hence innumerable illusions, and ungoverned passions; the swelling of self-sufficiency, and the stateliness of disdain; violent resentment, or sullen discontent, if not treated with the respect she supposes to be her due; in fine, a total inattention to the expectations of others, and absolute insensibility to whatever is beautiful in an unassuming, or noble in a disinterested behaviour. Now what is it that can dispel this visionary scene, and disabuse the much deluded sorceress? Nothing so effectual as Christianity.

If it should please the Almighty to impress upon her heart its sacred doctrines, they will shew her, in the most affecting lights, her own littleness, the degeneracy and misery of
corrupted

S E R M O N XII. 161

corrupted nature, the emptiness of temporal and the reality of eternal things, the duty she owes to her Maker, her Redeemer, and her fellow creatures; with the necessity of securing the divine favour, by a life of faith, contrition, and charity. By such views, the fantastic structures of Pride will be presently brought down; and on their ruins the plain and modest, but pleasing and graceful fabric of Meekness, will be easily raised. To speak without a metaphor: She will be delivered from the chief causes of ill humour; such, for instance, as obstinacy of self-will, the exorbitance of self-love, a passion for those gratifications that at once disappoint and enervate, and, finally, the expectation of too much homage, and too many compliances. The salvation of her soul, and the spirit of her Saviour, will become her principal objects: every virtue connected with these, will be her habitual study; and among the rest "peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness." With such a temper she will not be apt to think herself affronted; that revengeful disposition, of which your sex have been accused even to a proverb, will be her abhorrence; she will not dare, for a moment, to withhold from others that forgiveness, which she is conscious of wanting from the great God to herself; and as to her behaviour to those about her in general, it will breathe that winning

162 S E R M O N XII.

ning mildness, which seems to me the most distinguishing lineament in the image of Jesus.

HE, my sisters, was the perfect model of kindness and courtesy. The Friend of Man was his characteristic. He conversed with those whom the world despised; he stood still to hear the cries, and relieve the miseries, of the wretched; he even stooped (astounding goodness!) to wash the feet of his own disciples; "the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." The greatness of humility, and the beauty of compassion, he exemplified on all occasions. He shewed by his own practice, that there is nothing more becoming than the tear of generous sorrow, nothing so soothing as the language of a benevolent heart. Jesus weeping over the grave of Lazarus, consoling his mournful sisters, and instructing the solemn circle in the ideas of immortality, with the means of attaining it, is surely an object by infinite degrees more interesting and glorious, than all the conquerors of the earth crowned with laurels, and riding on the car of triumph, with numberless captives in their train.

His institution is of a piece with his character. It includes the grand principles of universal benevolence. Every wall of partition between

S E R M O N XII. 163

tween the nations it throws down ; abolishing the narrow distinction of Jews and Gentiles, and exploding the illiberal opposition of Greeks to Barbarians. The spirit of conquest for the sake of power it discourages, while it proclaims, enforces and inspires “ peace on earth, and good will towards men ;” whom it teaches to consider and love as brethren, forming one great family under one common parent, held together by charity as the bond of perfection, and of such account with the Supreme that he gave his only begotten Son to save them.

NEED I labour to prove how sweetly such discoveries as these coincide with the dispositions to modesty, sympathy, generosity, the desire of pleasing, the dread of violence, the horror at barbarity, the promptitude to cherish tender sentiments, and form endearing connexions, which are all so natural to the worthiest part of your sex ?

THE virtues of a Roman Matron, in the better times of that republic, appear on some accounts to have been greatly respectable. They were such as might be looked for, from her education amongst a people where ideas of prowess, patriotism, and glory, ran high ; where in effect, these things were regarded as the height of human excellence and felicity.

But

164 S E R M O N XII.

But not to insist on the national pride, and ungenerous prepossessions, on which those ideas were founded; it is manifest to me, that whatever force of grandeur the female mind might in other views derive from them, such advantage was far overbalanced by the loss or diminution of that gentleness and softness, which ever were, and ever will be, the sovereign charm of the female character. Nor do I wish the women of Great Britain, who profess a system so much more just, amiable, and happy, to adopt for the regulation of their temper any standard different from that in my text.

SOME of the most agreeable and important Consequences of a meek and quiet spirit in your sex, let us now proceed to survey. Where Nature has bestowed any kind of personal beauty, be it ever so inconsiderable; how early is it known, and at what pains are the generality of the too conscious possessors to display it, on all occasions, to the utmost advantage! But Nature has endowed the greater part of the sex with a constitutional Softness, which under right direction, would render them unspeakably more pleasing than any possible attraction that is purely external. Yet how few of you seem acquainted with its proper use, so as to turn it to any valuable account! What esteem might you not procure,
and

S E R M O N XII. 165

and what happiness communicate, if, instead of employing this softness, merely to foster passion in yourselves or others, you made it subservient to all the amiable purposes of a mild and obliging behaviour! How preposterous to think of any allurements, rather than that which should chiefly adorn you as Women!

THE gift I speak of is imparted, no doubt, in different degrees, and with various mixtures; nor will any culture prevent a diversity from appearing in individuals, with regard to this, as well as other features of the female mind: neither indeed ought it. Such diversity is not only beautiful in itself, but agreeably adapted to the various and different tastes of men. But still some portion of the quality under consideration is absolutely essential to feminine excellence. Like every other one, indeed, it requires the guard of Virtue and the guidance of Discretion. This is certain, that any good disposition you can name, how laudable or how eminent soever, if you could suppose it to be found alone, would constitute a character extremely imperfect, and produce effects sufficiently hurtful. Where an easiness of temper is particularly prevalent, and the heart uncommonly susceptible of warm emotions in the way of love and friendship; there,
without

166 S E R M O N XII.

without doubt, a peculiar strain of prudence and fortitude is required, to prevent a young person's being betrayed into great inconveniences, and dangerous tenderneſſes. But while I conſider Meekneſs as the crowning grace of a woman, it will be naturally underſtood, that ſome ſhare of the virtues and accompliſhments before recommended is preſuppoſed.

A CULTIVATED mind and delicate ſpirit, together with ſtrict principles of conduct, will teach you to make the neceſſary diſtinctions amongſt thoſe you converſe with, to join caution with freedom, and, while with a graceful eaſe you give to others what their characters claim, with a modeſt firmneſs to ſupport your own. There are few things, perhaps, more contemptible than an undiſtinguiſhing female, that can ſmile alike upon all, that ſeems prepared for every addreſs, that looks as if the freeſt would not be unwelcome, that ſcatters herſelf amongſt promiſcuous objects; who, if I may be indulged the expreſſion, prostitutes to every vagrant eye, and every new comer, any mental charms ſhe may poſſeſs, inſtead of preſerving them for the intimacies of virtuous love, or of ſacred friendſhip. You will readily conceive, that the deportment I would enforce is ſomething widely different.

IN effect, were religious and moral conſiderations

rations set aside, such women would not be very pleasing on the footing of female softness alone. Coquettes have commonly but little sensibility. Their natural graces, if any they had, are lost in levity and affectation. While they court the regards of all, they have none to bestow upon any. Let what was said long ago be here remembered, that a forward appearance, and light demeanour, immediately disgust a man of the least delicacy; who, if he is weak enough to love the courtship, has commonly however so much perception as not to approve of her who offers it. But good nature, under the government of good sense and real worth, will engage our esteem without flattering our folly, and reach that just standard of the female character, which consists in a fine composition of gentleness and dignity, of sweet complacency and virtuous reserve, the happy medium so hard to hit between Prudery and its opposite extreme.

As the former of these is most directly repugnant to that lovely quality which we are now considering, I will proceed to offer a few remarks upon it; willing to rectify the notions were it but of one of your sex, on a subject which in the present age may, by severe judges, be reckoned least of all necessary in discoursing to young women.

THAT

THAT a prudish behaviour is never sincere, I will not take upon me to affirm. It may arise sometimes from an original frigidity, or strange insensibility of make. I speak not of the dislikes that women conceive to particular men, while from others they are by no means unsusceptible of kind impressions. Neither do I speak of those females whose first address is frequently forbidden, occasioned by a peculiar reservedness of manner rather than temper, not at all incompatible with good affection; since it evidently wears off by degrees, and that excessive bashfulness gives place, on proper encouragement, to a carriage equally courteous and modest. But where a woman bears amongst candid spirits the character of a prude, there I must confess myself tempted to doubt both her honesty and her understanding.

THIS we are sure of, that it is very common for people to affect most the appearance of those virtues which they least possess. What they want in reality they would fain supply in shew, afraid of suspicion, where they are conscious of guilt; whereas those that are sound at heart, are seldom apprehensive of being suspected. "A good man shall be satisfied from himself," and generally leaves others to collect his principles from his practice. An honest confidence in the rectitude of his own intentions begets a simplicity of manners,

S E R M O N XII. 169

ners, that despises ostentation in all cases, and supercedes profession in most. I do not mean Religious Profession, which a good man will never think unnecessary, though he will always make it with modesty. In short; true virtue, whether male or female, is, like the sun, best seen in its own light.

OF a defect of sense prudery is an indisputable proof. It never succeeds in its attempts to impose. A woman of this character is considered by our sex as a hypocrite, by yours as a hypocrite and a spy at the same time. Both are incited to a keener inspection into her conduct. On the least failure in that, both are provoked to sharper reproach; and should the ungracious dissembler at last drop her disguise altogether, the triumph against her is universal: nor is a miscarriage ever forgotten which was preceded by pretensions to superior strictness. In any case she is a disagreeable creature, whom none can love, and whom most will shun. How just the words of an elegant writer on this subject!

“ Virtue is amiable, mild, serene;
 “ Without all beauty, and all peace within:
 “ The honour of a Prude is rage and storm;
 “ 'Tis ugliness in its most frightful form.”

SHOULD such a woman live to grow old in
 VOL. II. I the

the single state, she will be regarded with a mixture of hatred and contempt. When I say this, every one will recollect the imputation which has been so frequently brought against Unmarried females at that age. Is it an unpleasant idea? The inference is plain: Let it be your care now to lay in such a store of good humour and Christian Meekness, as mingling with other agreeable acquisitions, may prevent the advance of life from spoiling your cheerfulness, or robbing you of that benignity which communicates a grace to every condition, and of that consequence which youth and beauty alone cannot preserve. Establish it betimes as a certain maxim, that to be married is neither the one, nor the chief thing needful. Are all in that state happy? Or must she be necessarily unhappy, who is not in that state? May not a single woman be wise and virtuous? and if wise and virtuous, will she not be contented? and if contented, is she not happy in the best sense, as much so as can be expected in the mixed and variable lot of mortals? Is there any thing wrong in this reasoning? If it is right now, will it not be right ten, fifteen, twenty years hence? And in the mean while do not you see women in the situation supposed, who from the goodness of their temper, breeding, and understanding, are objects of tender regard; a regard so much the more valuable, that it is entertained by

the

S E R M O N XII. 171

the worthiest of her acquaintance, that it is no longer a tribute levied by the power of beauty, or aided by the influence of custom, but the pure reward of genuine merit, a merit tried by time, and matured by reflexion?

BUT do you imagine, that those only are disregarded and avoided who are peevish, fretful, or suspicious from age? Depend upon it, that such dispositions are alawys disgusting; were she that indulges them blooming as the spring, or beautiful as the day. No heart was ever won by disdain; no lover was ever kept by coldness. A man whom the extravagance of his passion has weakened may submit for a while to the petulant airs, and even insolent treatment, of a female that is handsome and young. Nay, such is the debility sometimes produced by this passion in men of little spirit or low understanding, that bad usage, blended with fits of kindness, shall actually make them doat the more. But what shall we say of that woman, who finding a man in her power sports with his heart, and to shew her dominion plays the tyrant? Alas! she knows not that true greatness consists in generosity, that a graceful compliance is inexpressibly pleasing, and that a man of worth may be for ever obliged by a noble frankness. She forgets too how soon an immoderate fondness is cured by connubial familiarity, and what severe re-

venge may be taken after marriage by him whom she treated ill before it, were he disposed to make retaliation.

BUT you want to maintain your importance; and why not? Would you do it in the most effectual manner? Worth and understanding are the proper means. Haughtiness is always little, violence impotent, and peevishness the infirmity of a child. Worth and understanding confer a consequence that is seldom in danger of being despised. She who shews a just sense of what belongs to her as a Woman, and as a Christian, will engage respect without seeking to command it. From her a word, a look expressive of virtuous disdain or pious indignation, will dash the boldest offender, if not uncommonly obdurate indeed. Nor can she probably be often obliged to bear the company of a wretch, who is proof against the lightning of excellence provoked. Be assured, on the other side, that good nature well placed will never lessen your value.

LOOK up, my fair ones, to the First Lady in this land, and learn affability: learn to know that however grandeur may secure external reverence, it is goodness only that inspires heartfelt esteem; that Royalty itself derives lustre from Meekness; and that the highest prerogative of rank is the power of imparting felicity more widely. Happy prince! thus to have

S E R M O N XII. 173

have found a companion, by whose chearful temper and gentle manners the cares of government are softened, and that satisfaction is enjoyed at home, which the splendor of a crown cannot confer. Illustrious pair! live long blessed in each other and in your children, bright examples of nuptial sanctity, parental affection, and domestic joy.—The personage I speak of seems indeed so thoroughly good, so naturally obliging, that I cannot doubt but she would have proved such in any station. But certain it is, that from those that are placed in the higher walks of life, a little condescension, a little favour, gives great delight. Is it not wonderful that women of birth and fortune should not please more generally, when they might please at so cheap a rate?

BUT not to dwell on those distinctions; what man is not charmed with an amiable courtesousness in any young woman, especially if otherwise attractive? Even common civility is grateful. But would you be resistless; Acquire a habit of fixed attention. It is a sort of silent flattery truly exquisite, and withal perfectly innocent. To the most attentive person in company you may observe the conversation almost always directed; while by interruption, listlessness, or a vacant look in those that are present, every creature that offers to speak is sure to be mortified. As a small degree of knowledge entertains in a wo-

man; so from a woman, though for a different reason, a small expression of kindness delights, particularly if she has beauty. But, in truth, without uttering a word, she has it in her power by this single mark of good breeding to captivate more than I can tell. In short, the listening to the person who speaks, with a recollected mild, and steady aspect, which nothing frivolous can divert, is perhaps the most valuable secret in the whole science of genuine politeness. From an agreeable young woman to an intelligent man it is incredibly soothing.

If to your natural softness you join that Christian meekness, which I now preach; both together will not fail, with the assistance of proper reflection and friendly advice, to accomplish you in the best and truest kind of breeding. You will not be in danger of putting yourselves forward in company, of contradicting bluntly, of asserting positively, of debating obstinately, of affecting a superiority to any present, of engrossing the discourse, of listening to yourselves with apparent satisfaction, of neglecting what is advanced by others, or of interrupting them without necessity.

WHEN these are not the effects of mere youthful folly, and even then they are displeasing, it is plain they proceed chiefly from pride and vanity. But we said before that meekness

S E R M O N XII. 175

is nearly allied to humility, and mightily assisted by it. If you be truly humble, you will manifest a noble forgetfulness of yourselves, with a becoming respect for others; a diffidence of your own sentiments, with a deference to theirs in doubtful points, or in such as they are entitled to know better; a readiness to learn of every one, with a disposition to give every one an opportunity of appearing with advantage, and thus to make all happy in their turn. Where the prevailing modes happen to be innocent, you will not affect to display the refinement of your taste, or the strictness of your principles, by a scrupulous singularity, or a saucy contempt of the opinions and manners of others. Nor will those contests and differences about precedency, form, and fashion, which inflame so many of your sex, ever interest minds that have learnt the dignity of humility, and the littleness of pride. In a word, the most important branches of Christian breeding you will practise with ease and pleasure, from an internal principle. A meek deportment is the natural and spontaneous growth of a lowly mind. Politeness in you will be the offspring of the heart. How much preferable to that specious, but hollow complaisance, studied by the fashionable and the false; which consists in an artful disguising of their own passions, and a flattering application to those of others, in a supple framing of the face to all occasions, in pro-

176 S E R M O N XII.

feeling the greatest respect without feeling the least, and in hiding very often the worst designs under the smile of familiarity, and the shew of friendship !

I USED the phrase Christian Breeding ; that kind of courtesy, which I point out, being expressly enjoined by one of the writers of the New Testament. Perhaps you think of St. Paul, that accomplished Apostle, who himself became all things to all men, that he might gain some. Such a precept might have been readily suggested by his early education in a seat of learning, and would have come very naturally from the hand that drew so divine a picture of Charity, the parent of Meekness. But the fact is, that the precept in question fell from the pen of an illiterate man, bred to the roughest of all employments. It was St. Peter, the inspired fisherman, that said, “ Be courteous : ”—to intimate that the lision which he had lately learnt from the meek and lowly Jesus, was able to soften the keenest, and subdue the hottest temper, and even give gentleness to one trained amongst winds and waves.

WHAT strangers to the spirit of the gospel must those women be, who have never controuled their own humours, whose looks are contempt, and whose words are arrogance ;
whose

S E R M O N XII. 177

whose general demeanour, unless when they are propitiated by adulation, or soothed by submission, is big with insolence and scorn ! How shall we express our horror at those female furies that, lost to decency and every mild feeling of their sex, can abandon themselves to “ all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, and all malice ! ” “ It is better,” says Solomon, “ to dwell in a corner of the house-top, than “ with a brawling woman in a wide house ; ” he might have added, or in a magnificent palace. In so doing he would have probably spoken from experience ; since it may be presumed that some of those eastern ladies, who had by their beauty enslaved the unhappy monarch, were willing now and then by their tongues to convince him of their prerogative. The saying of the Son of Sirach, on the same subject, is yet stronger, as well as more ironical. “ A loud crying woman,” says he, “ and “ a scold shall be sought out to drive away “ the enemy.” That spirited writer satirizes the female vices in general, with great freedom ; but there is scarce any of them, which he more frequently or more severely exposes, than this of unquietness and ill temper.

WHEN a woman of such dispositions enters

178 S E R M O N XII.

ters into the nuptial state, what wretchedness can equal his to whose lot she falls? To be tied for life to a being, whom neither reason can convince, nor patience win, nor any thing conquer but main force; a domestic plague, a bosom fiend, from whom only her death or his own can deliver him—mysterious Providence! who can unfold the reasons of thy procedure, when such is the portion of a good man; who, mild himself and amiable, would have given and received peculiar felicity, had he been connected with some gentle female?

BUT let it be remembered, that violence is not necessary to constitute ill temper. Obstinacy alone will do it. Let me conjure you, by all that is dear and lovely, to guard against that. Be assured there is not a man living, whose affection it does not chill, let him be otherwise ever so warm an admirer. There may be those who, during the short reign of Beauty, will support it. But that being over, and the fascination of appetite dissolved, a disputatious, perverse, and stubborn female, will always offend; and, where there is any manhood left, will often provoke to a dangerous degree. In the mean time, every one who is not in love will be disgusted; nor can any charm of understanding, or of person, compensate the want of soft compliance, and
meek

meek submission, in a woman. These the men are taught by nature, by education, and by custom, to consider as your duty, and their right; neither will they be easily brought to dispense with it. Some of them you may subdue; but you can persuade none of them into a different system. If yet, after all, you will place your glory in despotic rule instead of kind attraction, choosing rather to tyrannize over dastardly slaves under the form of husbands, than to influence those husbands as tender friends; what can we say, but that we pity them much, and you more? For the idea of a little paltry power assumed without title, and exercised without discretion, to give up the worthiest triumphs of your sex, how mean and how miserable!

IN the passage from which we have taken our text, the Apostle exhorts Christian Women to be in subjection to their own husbands; adding, as a motive which deserved their consideration, “that if any obey not the word, “they also without the word may be won by “the conversation of the wives, while they “behold your chaste conversation coupled with “fear;” and so he goes on to recommend that meek and quiet spirit, which ought to be their principal ornament. With relation to the particular case by him supposed, his meaning evidently is, that those his female disciples might,

might, by a pious and exact deportment, full of sweetness and moderation, gain their husbands over to a religion which they had not yet embraced, but which they would be no longer able to resist, when they beheld and experienced its happy effects on the tempers and manners of their wives. To every excellent woman, that in this way has been instrumental to save a soul from death, we may address, though in a lower sense, those words which were spoken by Gabriel to the Virgin Mary on a great occasion, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women."

I CANNOT do justice to this part of my argument without remarking, that there is reason to fear much of the worthlessness of many married men, as well as much of the unhappiness both of them and their partners, must be imputed to the Turbulent Passions or Uncomplying Humours of the latter. Such is the sameness of the matrimonial state on one hand, such its cares on the other, and, it is but fair to add, such the indisposition of numbers of men to be long delighted; that, to preserve the attachment of a husband unimpaired, the utmost attention and the mildest complacence are commonly requisite on the side of the woman.

“ Ev’n

- ‘ Ev’n in the happiest choice, where fav’ring
 heav’n
 “ Has equal love and easy fortune given,
 “ Think not, the husband gain’d, that all is
 done ;
 “ The prize of happiness must still be won ;
 “ And oft, the careless find it to their cost,
 “ The lover in the husband may be lost :
 “ The graces might alone his heart allure ;
 “ They and the Virtues meeting must se-
 cure.”

I AM astonished at the folly of many wo-
 men, who are still reproaching men for leav-
 ing them alone, for preferring this or that
 company to theirs, for treating them with
 this and the other mark of disregard or indif-
 ference; when, to speak the truth, they have
 themselves in a great measure to blame. Not
 that I would justify the men in any thing
 wrong on their part. But had you behaved
 to them with a more respectful observance,
 and a more equal tenderness; studying their
 humours, overlooking their mistakes, submit-
 ting to their opinions in matters indifferent,
 passing by little instances of unevenness, ca-
 price, or passion, giving soft answers to haf-
 ty words, complaining as seldom as possible,
 and making it your daily care to relieve their
 anxieties, and prevent their wishes, to enli-
 ven the hour of dulness, and call up the
 ideas

ideas of felicity : had you pursued this conduct, I doubt not but you would have maintained and even increased their esteem, so far as to have secured every degree of influence that could conduce to their virtue, or your mutual satisfaction ; and your house might at this day have been the abode of domestic bliss.

THERE may, it is true, be some husbands whom no goodness can impress. We owned it before : but still we have ground to believe, that of men who would have turned out better, had they met with discreet and obliging women, multitudes have been lost by the inattention and neglect, as well as not a few by the impertinence and perverseness of their wives. Little do many of you think how easily the heart may be alienated. A generous readiness to make every kind allowance for what may be amiss in others, is perhaps the rarest quality in the world ; it is, however, one of the most necessary, in the several connexions of society, but especially in the nearest of all connexions. And yet how few husbands, comparatively speaking, have the good nature to exercise it towards the companions of their life ! How soon after marriage does it often happen, that every error is magnified into a fault, every fault into a vice, and often a single look is construed into I know not what enorm-

enormity! One great source of this misery is, that most men expect too much from the women they marry, expect to be always received with smiles, and cherished by endearments; forgetting that they do not always deserve them, that those women are like themselves imperfect, that even the best temper will be hurt by circumstances, and that the brightest sky cannot for ever remain unclouded. But, notwithstanding all this, it continues true, that women might often do much more to please. Their dropping to the husband, as we have frequently seen, those engaging manners which they practised on the lover, is impiety and distraction at the same instant; as if the solemn vows they made at the altar were words of course, and their only concern was to be married, not to be happy, or to gain a heart, not to keep it. They are apt also to forget in their turn, that the complacency and obsequiousness of courtship seldom extend into wedlock; that the raptures of a common passion are necessarily short; that an attachment without tenderness, or at most an affection without delicacy, is as much as can be hoped from the ordinary run of husbands; and that to preserve even this requires both vigilance and gentleness.

BUT

BUT that vigilance which is forced will be frequently suspended; and that gentleness which is put on will be always precarious. Therefore we wish you to acquire early the habits of self-controul, and to cultivate from principle a meek and quiet spirit. This you will do with success, if imploring and depending on the grace of God, you make conscience of curbing betimes the irascible passions of nature, of submitting calmly to the daily mortifications of life, of generously yielding to those about you, and particularly of condescending to persons of low estate.

I HAVE never seen a woman eminent for the last of these qualities, who was not excellent in many other ways. Respect to superiors may be enforced by fear, or prompted by interest, and is therefore no demonstrative proof of a good heart. But habitual mildness to those of inferior rank, is one of its surest indications. That young lady cannot have a bad mind, who readily enters into the distresses, and affectionately contributes to the felicity, of those whom Providence has placed beneath her. In reality, there is no such discovery of your tempers as your treatment of domestics. She is always the worthiest character who behaves best at home, and is most liked by the servants. They are the truest judges of a woman's dispositions,
be-

because to them disguise is laid aside, and they see her in all lights. An unaffected propension to use them well, without partiality and without caprice, argues a confirmed benevolence. Those who use them otherwise, will urge indeed their mercenary spirit, their want of gratitude, their want of worth; and such complaints may in many instances be too well founded. But Humanity is noble, and will rise above little considerations; Christianity is divine, and will not be overcome of evil, but will overcome evil with good. A faithful servant is a treasure, entitled to every possible mark of regard; and some such there certainly are in this country. But it must be confessed, the generality of that class are often highly provoking: they are ever ready to corrupt one another; and there can be little attachment where there is no principle. Nevertheless, I am persuaded, that treating them with tenderness when sick, and with gentleness at other times, without making them confidants, would, joined to a wise and pious example, go far to gain and reform many of them. At any rate, condescension and generosity to those of lower station, will always give satisfaction to that mind in which there is real superiority.

YOUR behaving handsomely to your friends,
and courteously to all with whom you converse,

verse, though not so certainly characteristic of the virtue I paint, will yet be a natural and agreeable effect of it. Meekness is like the light, which spreads itself every where; though, like the light too, it pleases most where it is least looked for. To carry on the resemblance; like that it will be sometimes obscured, but like that also, we cannot bear its being long absent. Starts of petulance may be forgiven to prosperity; fits of fretfulness are natural to affliction: but what can be pleaded for harbouring a Passionate or a Peevish Temper, easily provoked and hardly pacified?

WHEN I have seen a woman in a rage, I have always wished for a mirror at hand, to shew her to herself. How would she have started back from her own image, if not an absolute Demon! To those of such a stamp I have nothing to say but this, that a place awaits them where their rage will have its full scope for ever. But some are of a calmer strain, sour, splenetic, and sullen; not less unchristian, or less unfemale than the others, and on one account much worse. In those the storm breaks and clears; in these all is settled gloom, that admits no sunshine, that presents no prospect of the chearful kind. For vulgar and unenlightened spirits, thus continually overcast, there may be some excuse, from the want of better instruction, that might have helped

helped to correct their natural infelicity of temper. But what shall be said for habitual rancour, deep resentment, and cool malignity in those women who, together with understandings originally good (for some such there are) have enjoyed the advantages of books and conversation, of elegant breeding and knowledge of the world? In truth, their heads seem to have starved their hearts; and the talents they possess serve only to render them completer devils.

It is a strange mistake of many who think, that, provided they do not indulge to one particular passion, they may give a loose to all the rest: as if a woman could offend only by incontinence; or as if her not committing a sin to which perhaps from the coldness of her complexion she has no propensity, or from which she is restrained by the dread of immediate infamy and ruin, would atone for the commission of others without number; for vanity and arrogance, for selfishness and envy, for suspicion and revenge, for unbounded censoriousness, or the blackest malice. I am sufficiently aware that Pride may not comprehend the remark, and that Uncharitableness may not forgive it: but no candid hearer will mistake me when I say, that, however scandalous and however destructive the lusts of the flesh may be, those of the mind are yet more heinous, being the proper and peculiar image
of.

188 S E R M O N XII.

of the worst and wickedest being in the universe; in one word, they are infernal.

OUR Master understood the distinction well, and was not afraid to shew that he understood it. In the capacity of a teacher he conversed freely with publicans and sinners; he treated them tenderly: he came not, as himself said, “to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” What gentleness did he not display to the poor creature taken in adultery! What forgiveness of the well-known female penitent, who but a little before had been plunged in disorder and shame! Such he declared should enter into the kingdom of heaven more readily than the Scribes and Pharisees, in spite of all their ablutions and prayers, their frequent fastings and specious demeanour; a proud, self-justifying, and most unmerciful set of men, whom he scrupled not for these reasons to pronounce “the children of the devil.” Let me persuade you, from the example of your Saviour, to learn Pity towards such as are gone astray. How ungracious in women not to shew mercy to women! Let me prevail with you never to express a supercilious contempt, or unforgiving severity, on the subject of those hapless beings whose misery pleads for commiseration yet louder than their crimes call for censure. Which of you can be sure that you would not have yielded to the same temptations which overcame them? Where
are

are those perfect characters that can answer for their own stability? Who made you to differ from the wretchedest of human kind? Believe me, Christians, the most genuine virtue is always the most humble, and the most charitable.—Merciful heaven, may the best gifts of thy providence, and the sweetest influences of thy grace, descend evermore on that blessed Establishment, which has opened a sanctuary for wretched females weary of vice, and willing to reform. May all its benefactors obtain mercy in the day of the Lord. What superior honour does such an establishment, with its sister institution, that happy Asylum for the helpless young creatures of your sex who are yet uncorrupted, reflect on this nation! They are truly the most distinguishing glory of Britain; the fairest flowers, if I may so say, in all the garland of English Humanity.

BUT let me recommend to you Candour with regard to your sex in general, as well as compassion towards the unhappy part of it. Ah, my fair clients, what shall we say in your behalf to those men who are always telling us of your ill-natured remarks, or illiberal insinuations to the disadvantage of one another? Such as resign themselves, without controul, to this accursed passion, we give up at once with indignation and abhorrence. Those wil-
ful

ful and deliberate destroyers of reputation are of their “father the devil, who was” an accuser, and “a murderer from the beginning;” nor, while they do his works, will it avail them aught, though like him they could in other respects “transform themselves into angels of light.” No lustre of beauty, no brilliancy of understanding, can, even among the warmest friends of the sex, make compensation for the spirit of censoriousness in a female. For my own part, I consider good nature and candid sentiments as so peculiarly indispensable in every woman, that, when I want to estimate the character of any young lady, I take the first opportunity of commending highly some person of her own sex, and about her own age, but rather younger, whom she knows, and who is deservedly a favourite with the men. If without hesitation, reserve, or a single But, if with apparent pleasure and cordiality she joins in the praise; I am willing from that moment to form a favourable opinion of her heart. I may be mistaken: it may be all artifice; but, for the most part, I think not. If on the contrary—But I need not express the rest. Inform us, ye students of human nature, what it is in the female mind that, without the restraints of superior worth, inclines it so strongly to the love of scandal? I am disposed to hope that, beside the competitions formerly explained,

explained, it may be often owing to the acrimony produced by disappointment, and often to the habits contracted by associating with those who, having no fund of entertainment in themselves, are forced to seek it at the expence of others. Be it owing however to what it will, one thing is certain, that a proneness to indulge it is always detestable; as, on the other hand, she who has the generosity to approve most, will have always the satisfaction of being most approved; and for the best of qualities, an amiable temper.—No, my fair ones, nothing can make amends for the want of that. It is like wisdom; “It cannot be
 “valued with the gold of Ophir, with the
 “precious onyx or the sapphire. The gold
 “and the crystal cannot equal it; and the
 “exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine
 “gold. No mention shall be made of coral
 “or of pearls: for the price of it is above
 “rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not
 “equal it.” Preserve it, dearly beloved, and cherish it for ever.

LET “the law of kindness” be in your tongue. “A froward mouth and perverse lips put far from you.” Guard against every word, against every hint that would give pain unnecessarily to any creature. Beware of mistaking pertness for vivacity, or petulance for spirit. Tremble at the thought of sacrificing friendship to a jest. Indulge in no case a propensity

penfity to contradiction, or the itch of criticism. Be not hasty to draw characters, in general companies especially. Whenever you do, be fure to touch on what is praise-worthy: something praise-worthy there is in every character. Over what is culpable throw the veil of charity as often as you can. As well in this as in other respects, "charity shall hide a multitude of fins." When the absent are condemned, justify their conduct, if possible; extenuate it, if not: some circumstance of extenuation may be almost always found. If in your judgment of human actions you must frequently err, let it ever be on the favourable side; and remember, that one of a noble nature had much rather be thought humane than witty, simple than severe. Shew yourselves pleased, as often as you really are so; and you will seldom fail of pleasing. Join to all the rest the magnanimity of applauding freely in other women that beauty, and those accomplishments, which you yourselves may chance not to possess, or to possess only in an inferior degree.—How lovely and great will you appear by an unaffected attention to such maxims! The sparkling of wit, or the splendor of fortune in others, may amuse and dazzle for a time; but you shall secure solid and lasting esteem. Your society will be sought, as easy and safe; your friendship will be prized, as sincere and affectionate; in your tender bosoms your acquaintance will long to repose

repose their hearts ; and from your sympathetic manner of entering into their concerns, they will receive consolation.

BUT is there no danger of sinking into insipidity, by such a behaviour? Not the least; if it is accompanied with those other qualities which women ought to cultivate. And what should hinder the softest spirit of your sex from acquiring, if she will, any one virtue or accomplishment proportionate to her capacity? It is possible indeed, that such a cast of mind may be attended with less resolution in difficulties, with less endurance of affliction, with less acuteness of wit, or less force of understanding; but by due pains taken with herself, a woman of this sort will, I apprehend, beyond all others, improve into that form of character, which we would willingly convince you is the most beautiful in a female. There are, I will acknowledge, now and then in some of a different mould, certain little caprices, or lively sallies and starts of humour, that are not unpleasing on particular occasions. But then they require to be bounded by decency, and blended with sense; nor must the great principles of good affection be ever forgotten.

AMONGST the many other advantages resulting from female meekness, I must not omit to mention how much it will conduce to Personal Attraction. As it commonly implies

calm passions, so it naturally produces, or happily promotes, that serene manner which is always engaging, (a flutter never is) and which, meeting a sentimental mind, refines very readily into a gracefulness of mein, more real than any that is acquired in gay assemblies, and to an observant eye much more alluring. Imagine a circle of handsome young women, where one is distinguished above the rest by a flowing yet composed affability; by a meek look, and modest carriage, in which there appears no consciousness of beauty, no return upon herself, no study to become the object of the company, no visible attention to her dress or person, but a recollected air, and steady regard to those about her; what superior pleasure and respect will her presence necessarily inspire! Suppose her, if you will, entirely silent, from a disposition to give place to others who may seem more desirous of talking; will not her very silence interest? But when, on finding room left her to share in the discourse, she speaks with that sweetness of voice which often accompanies mild affections, expressing in gentle unstudied accents such sentiments as are worthy of herself; I leave you to guess the effect on every susceptible by-stander. Alas! my friends, what is all the momentary lustre you are continually labouring to give those lips, compared with the permanent beauties of a lovely mind, breathing from them in agreeable conversation?

tion? Let me add, where the grace of meekness has the soul in full possession, it will be often seen beaming in the eyes with a bland sensibility, and sporting on the countenance in placid smiles, more soft than the softest glow of a summer evening; especially, when at any time the mind is exalted into livelier emotions of benignity and joy. Or once more let us suppose, that affliction has given to such a face a cast of solemnity and languor; it will still retain a kind of sober charm that is inexpressibly affecting. In truth, beauty never touches the heart so deeply, as when with a sweet unreluctant surrender it seems ready to faint under the shock of misfortune, or the load of sorrow. But to proceed.

I WOULD take the liberty to observe, that Christian meekness will be of particular use to prevent the Artful Behaviour so frequently complained of in women, and in many instances so justly. The complaint, I confess, comes with an ill grace from those men whose daily study it is, in one shape or another, to impose on the sex; nor can I doubt but many of the latter would have more sincerity, if the others had less design. They probably think themselves justified in baffling art by art; and from the science of defence and resistance, they are too apt to pass to that of stratagem and attack. It is indeed marvellous to what lengths many of them carry it, till they become mere

196 S E R M O N XII.

compositions of hypocrisy ; where each ingenuous feeling is lost, and every word, look, motion, and minute proceeding, is a lye. Whether it be that Nature has given them more subtilty, or that education has taught them more disguise, or that their condition affords them greater leisure to think of such things, or that they are willing to make up in wiles what they want in strength ; whether it be owing to one, or to all of these causes, I know not : but the fact is this, that there are very few men able to contend with a cunning woman in her own way.

NEVERTHELESS, I must inform such dissemblers, that cunning is not true ability ; it is at best but left-handed wisdom ; it carries with it an obliquity, and an impotence, that a noble mind will, and that a capable one, ought to despise. I need not say, that it is diametrically opposite to the simplicity of the gospel, which admits our being “ wise as serpents ” only so far as is consistent with our being “ harmless as doves.” The maxims of a virtuous prudence are comprehensive ; and she who has learnt, with an humble reliance on Heaven’s direction, to apply them as occasion requires, will never want the assistance of artifice. In short, artifice is both a feeble auxiliary very often, and almost constantly betraying those that trust to it. Fond prepossession, or unsuspecting candour, may no doubt be easily

S E R M O N XII. 197

sly deceived by female disguise; but it is difficult to act a part long. Diffimulation will sometimes let fall the mask; and he has not the spirit of a man, who does not abhor and scorn the detected impostor. Mean while, what a laborious task is hers! How anxious, ignoble, and wretched! From this, my fair disciples, native goodness and Christian meekness will save you. By being what you ought to appear, you will be under no temptation of appearing what you are not. An obliging conversation, and soft deportment, will proceed from you freely as from a living fountain. Having no bad passions to conceal, your thoughts and manners will be transparent. Truth will be your prompter, while Discretion is your guard. In you Virtue will wear her mildest aspect, without constraint and without study. The baseness and barbarity of inviting or encouraging addressees, which you mean not in the end to accept, you will avoid and detest. A proffered heart you will refuse with civility and gratitude, where you cannot return your own; or where you can and ought, you will accept with generosity and affection. Let me add upon the whole, that as every mode of diffimulation is equally injudicious and unbecoming, so she will always be the most attractive, while she is the only honourable character, who cultivates genuine worth instead of artificial forms, and practises

undissembled sweetness instead of fictitious courtesy.

SUCH a one was Isabella, the darling of all who knew her. She lived indeed where Virtue was not eclipsed by fortune, and where depravity of manners did not prevent the admiration of excellence. Her mind was very early accomplished; it was that of a woman, when she was yet but a child. It shone in her face with a generous warmth, and at the same time a calm intelligence, seldom seen in a countenance so young; it produced in her whole deportment a mixture of softness and dignity, which she alone did not perceive. In company, the merits of others, not her own, engaged all her attention. She was never pert. Her diffidence kept her too frequently silent: when she spoke, it was with sweet simplicity and smiling respect. Her voice was melody itself, without that frivolous whine which is often occasioned by dissembling, and often by affectation. Amongst her intimate companions she was sprightly and playful: for them she felt the enthusiasm of friendship. Her pen flowed in a stream of sentiment alike tender and exalted; it was the interpreter of her heart. Every duty becoming her station, and consistent with her years, she fulfilled from instinct sanctified by piety; a piety, in which meekness still presided. Heaven

S E R M O N XII. 199

ven beheld so gentle a spirit with complacence, and took her away from the evil to come; took her to itself, in all the purity of untainted virtue. She was seized on a sudden: I then saw her: she was no way alarmed. Young and beautiful, admired and happy, she surrendered her soul with a placid resignation, she smiled in her last moments; the smile remained on her clay-cold visage for some time after the informing mind was fled. She was lovely and pleasant in her life, and in her death an object of universal and affectionate lamentation. Her little story furnishes a proof, that sentiment and meekness conjoined, are superior to all other allurements; and that dispositions at once mild and virtuous require neither disguise nor heightening.

I PRESUME you know, that the language of inspiration represents the internal character under the notion of a person or living form, which it styles the Old or New Man, according as the principles of sin or of holiness have the ascendant. By the same figure of speech, the inward graces and decorations of a Christian are here termed “the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible;” to contrast them with that corporeal beauty, and those external embellishments, which are immediately palpable to the senses, and like

them subject to decay and corruption. Thus it is St. Peter would call off your too anxious attention from inferior, outside, and short-lived attractions, whether original or assumed, to such as are of supreme value, being in their nature spiritual and immortal. Nor does he simply rest there, but farther recommends the latter as highly acceptable to your Maker, “even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”

SUCH a spirit indeed bears a near resemblance to his own most merciful and blessed attributes, to his well beloved Son and our divinely benevolent Saviour, to those good and happy creatures that constitute the angelic world, and to all the excellent ones of human kind, both on earth and in heaven, that belong to the same great family of love. Such a spirit proceeds directly from the common parent, and cannot but be pleasing to its author. What says St. James? “The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits.” Such is the temper of Christianity, and such are its effects.

To cherish them in yourselves let all the preceding considerations incite you; but above them all, be engaged by the divine ambition
of

of being approved by the Sovereign Judge and Rewarder of excellence. What can be added to such an argument; or what can we offer upon it, that will be any way answerable to its dignity? To appear beautiful in the eye of God; to be beloved by the monarch of the universe; to be admitted, if I may use the phrase, as so many fair and shining pillars into his temple below; while he contemplates each with a pleasing aspect, and purposes to remove them in due time to his sanctuary on high, where they shall remain his everlasting delight, as well as the never-ceasing admiration of surrounding cherubims—great Creator, what can equal such exaltation and felicity? And can any of you, my hearers, be so destitute of every nobler sentiment as not to aspire after privileges like these? Unmoved by such ideas, can you turn away with impatience, and run to scenes of dress and show with the same little inglorious passions as before; preferring to the approbation of the Eternal the slightest regards of the silliest mortals? Go, thou senseless creature, and boast of being admired by the butterflies of a day! See what they will do for thee, when he whose favour thou neglectest, and for such things, shall cause thy “beauty to consume like a moth,” and thy heart to sink within thee like a stone. Imagination shudders at the thought of that day, when thou shalt en-

ter, forlorn, forsaken, and trembling, those dismal regions which the voice of adulation cannot reach, and nothing shall be heard but sounds of reproach, and blasphemy, and woe ; where stripped of every ornament that now decks thy body, and stripped of that body itself, thy mind must appear without shelter or covering, all deformed and ghastly, mangled with the wounds of despairing guilt, and distorted by the violence of envenomed passions, while demons shall mock at thy misery. Save us, almighty Redeemer, save these young people from a doom so dreadful !

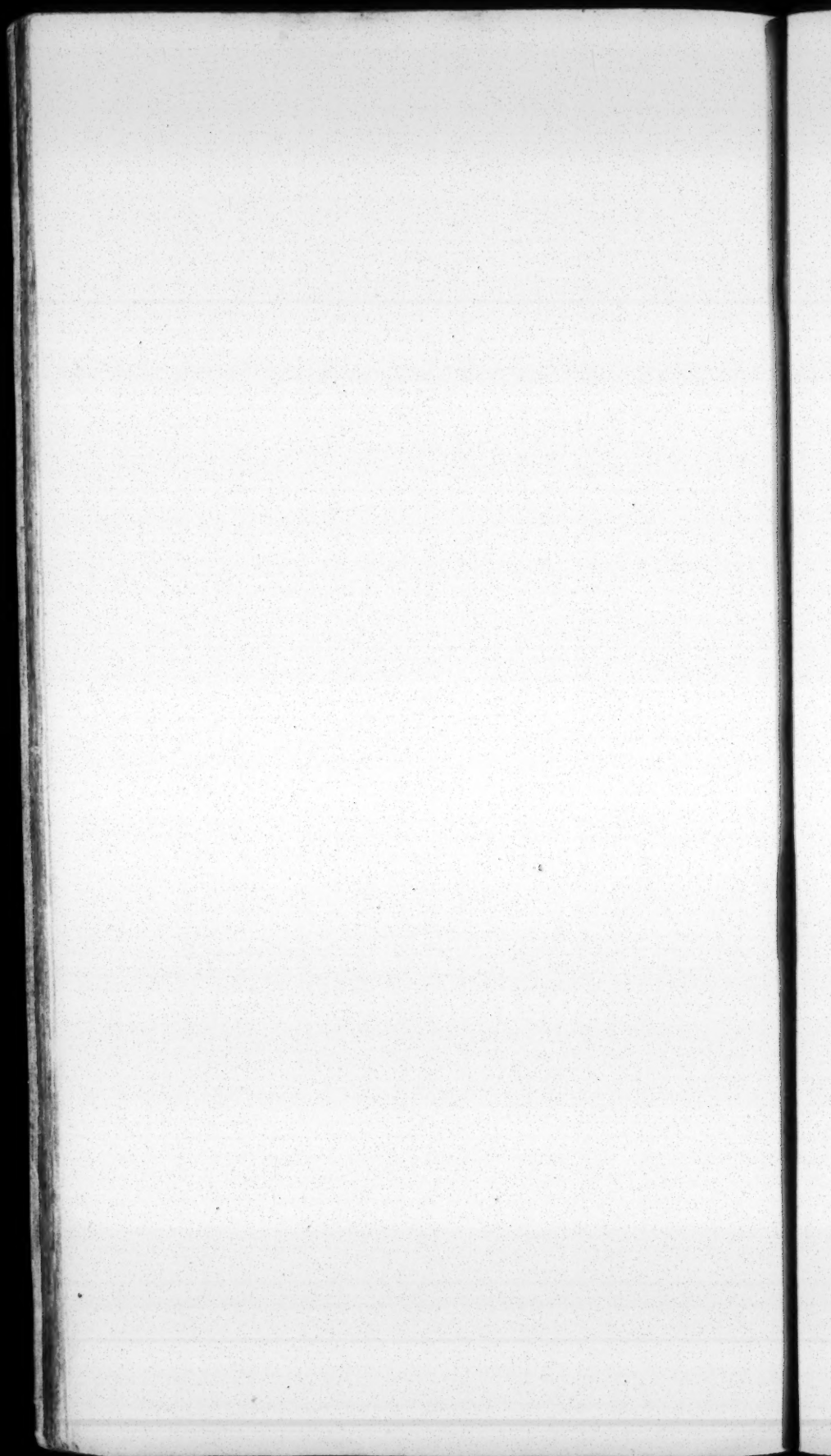
WOULD you concur to prevent it ? Begin with restraining the love of ornament ; or rather, turn that dangerous affection into a higher channel, and let it flow : it will then become safe, useful, and noble. Here you will have scope for the largest fancy. To the adorning of the character we wish you to set no bounds. In dressing the soul for the company of saints, of angels, of God himself, you cannot employ too much thought or time. In studying and cultivating “ the hidden man “ of the heart,” you will every day discover new charms, that will improve with age, bloom in sickness, live in death, survive the desolation of the grave, ascend triumphant to the world of perfect beauty, and continue to brighten under the smile of Heaven for ever. In a word, all the best beings in the creation,
together

together with the Creator himself, concur in loving and honouring a beauteous mind.

NOR is this a distinction, for which you must contend with too many competitors. Carry the passion for dress almost ever so high, you will still have the mortification to find some one or other outshine you in taste, or in magnificence : but the palm of wisdom you may bear away from the greater part unenvied, if you will only allow them the superiority of fashion. Oh ! that I knew how to awaken on this subject the spirit of ambition in those who are so prone to indulge it on a thousand others. Happy preacher, couldst thou behold thy hearers filled with emulation to excel one another, in all the modest graces and mild accomplishments that can adorn their sex ! Happy Britain, were this the æra in which Religion, with her whole train of Virtues, might rise into repute amongst thy children ; in which thy sons might be “ as plants grown up in their youth,” and thy “ daughters as corner-stones polished after the similitude of a palace !”



CONCLUSION.



CONCLUSION.

THE preacher can readily suppose, that many things advanced on the subject of Women, in the course of these Sermons, will be deemed by the generality of his own sex too soothing, while, by the majority of yours, many will be judged too severe; such is the force of prejudice on both sides. That he himself is quite impartial, it is impossible for him to be certain. He can only say, that he has honestly endeavoured, according to the best of his capacity, to hold the balance even. Throughout the whole, he had but one single point to study; which was, to advance what he believed to be true, and what he hoped at the same time might be useful. He knew, and considered, that he is accountable at a higher tribunal than any upon earth. If he has wished to please, it was from a solicitude “for your good to edification.” If he has happened to offend, it was without malignity or design. He should be sorry to be counted your enemy, for telling you the truth. But his concern in that case would be for you, not for himself; he is ambitious of your approbation, but he is much more so of his own.

His happiest days having been chiefly passed
in the conversation of women of worth and
under-

208 C O N C L U S I O N.

understanding, it is certain, that for such he has ever entertained a peculiar esteem. He pretends not indeed, that even amongst them he has found out a jewel without a flaw. But notwithstanding their imperfections, justice exacts from him this testimony, that, when they have, in any tolerable degree, approached to the standard of what we have so often styled Female Excellence, they have appeared to him, with a few exceptions in favour of the other sex, by far the devoutest worshippers, the warmest friends, and the most sentimental as well as entertaining companions. What he has principally to lament is his meeting with so small a number, who have had elevation enough to practise an entire simplicity of manners, sense enough wholly to forget their persons in the company of men, and meekness enough to be quite content when not the objects of immediate attention.

If the preacher has endeavoured, upon the principles of candour, to account for some passions in the sex that seem at first sight less innocent, or less excusable; it was under the sanction and impression of that great evangelical law, " Judge not, that ye be not judged. " For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall " be judged : and with what measure ye mete, " it shall be measured to you again." If he has addressed those young persons who formed
his

his audience, in a style of peculiar tenderness, the reason, in plain terms, was because he felt it; nor does he think, that either as a man, or as a preacher, he ought to suppress, if he could, an affection which Nature has implanted, and which, kept within proper bounds, Religion does not prohibit.

If he has attempted to insinuate instruction under the smiles of complacency, or to enforce admonition with the fervours of friendship; say, ye censors of the age, is he really to blame? Is an austere countenance the proper face of zeal, or a distant formality the genuine mark of holiness? To disgust by rudeness, or to discourage by rigour—is that the way to win souls? Was it the way of the Apostles, or their Master? Merciful Saviour! what words can paint thy benignity, into whose lips grace was poured, who didst “not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax,” whose character was like that of thy Father, love? I touched before on the spirit that breathed in his teaching: let me just add here, that his parables, which made so great a part of it, were pointed to the imagination no less than to the heart; presenting the strongest pictures of life and nature, at the same time that by these very means they impressed the noblest lessons of piety and truth. To speak in general, will any
one

one say, that the severity of censure must never be softened, nor the awfulness of solemnity tempered; not even when the preacher has the Youthful and Gay for his hearers? They surely are strangers to true Wisdom who suppose her monitions incompatible with cheerful images or joyful ideas; surely those are unacquainted with the human mind, who hope to reform its errors without conciliating its affections, or think that the tutoring of terror alone will produce the love of goodness.

IN some sentiments which I have offered to your consideration, I should not be surprised if I have been taxed with idle refinement. We live in an age, when whatever is held by the Few most solid and valuable, is by the Many derided as visionary, or decried as insignificant. In the present age an accomplished female is apt to be shunned under the notion of a Learned Lady; and the Virtuous Woman in the Proverbs would be in danger of being ridiculed as a composition of affectation. In this age the subject of dress and ornament, I am ready to acknowledge, is better understood than formerly; but in these how often are modesty, frugality, and simple elegance, given up to levity or fashion, to vain competition, or mistaken appearance! In this age the strictness of female decorum, and the retirings of female reserve, must expect to be construed

CONCLUSION. 211

strued into ignorance of the world, if not into hypocritical airs of female sanctity. In this polite age, I had almost asked, where is the man that believes any woman to be modest at heart; and where is the woman that dares to be superior to the follies of her sex? A passion exalted by generosity, and refined by sentiment, in which the man, not the equipage, was regarded, in which the highest gratifications of sense were the lowest objects of affection—such a passion is now considered by the generality as romance. Such lovers might exist in the days of old, or possibly may be yet found in the obscurity of retreat; but in the gay world, where all is tainted with sensuality, and sacrificed to show, they would appear too ungenteel to be respectable, and too insipid to be happy. Here, alas! how few have the fortitude to live to their own hearts, the worth to cultivate the joys of friendship, or the soul to seek conjugal felicity in conjugal esteem! Amidst the hurry and dissipation of diversions, the profligacy or insignificance of play, the futility or frivolousness of formal visiting; what regard or what room is left for self-possession or mutual confidence, for rational conversation, or improving study, for the pleasing cares of a family, or that amiable mixture of minds without which social life is modish disguise or mean indulgence? Is it necessary to add, how scanty a portion of time is now given to private

212 C O N C L U S I O N.

vate devotion ; how little the sabbath is made a day of rest from the toil of pleasure, or the tumult of passion ; and to what raillery from the licentious of both sexes she is exposed, who would fill up the duties of that day with seriousness, reverence, and constancy ? Let me only subjoin, that the modes of breeding now established for young women are such, that composure and softness are hardly deemed consistent, that a demeanour, perfectly attentive, is in hazard of passing for want of vivacity, and a temper thoroughly meek for want of spirit.

BUT what are you to infer from all this ? That you must “ follow a multitude to do evil,” or relinquish Wisdom, because she is renounced by fools ? She still continues to be “ justified of her children ;” and be assured, my dear auditory, that those very fools shall be forced one day to acknowledge her worth. A few short years rolled away, and this gaudy scene will disappear. Where are now many of the miserable flutterers, that we have seen fret their hour on the stage of Vanity ? Doctrine like this They too once despised as idle refinement, or disrelished as nauseous dulness. Do you imagine they are of the same mind still ? How, think ye, will it appear to yourselves in the decrepitude of age, and on the bed of death ? By what standard shall you then wish
to

CONCLUSION. 213

to have regulated yourselves ; by that of reasonable women and virtuous believers, or by the manners and maxims of a distracted and degenerate age ?

AGAINST the latter let me warn you, by every thing that is prudent and good, by all that can promote the importance of your sex, the reformation of ours, and the happiness of both ; let me warn you, in the name of your country, in the name of your posterity, in the name of God ! suffer not Folly to deceive, or Flattery to abuse you. The time cannot be very distant, in which beauty shall fade as a flower, by the course of nature : the period may be near at hand, when it shall shrink at once, under the violence of disease. However you may try to forget it, life is all uncertain : and when those eyes, now full of lucid spirit, shall sink in darkness, when that complexion, now bright and blooming, shall die away into a livid hue, and men shall turn with horror from those features which they behold at present with delight ; what will the world avail you, or the world's applause ? Death, I say, Death is no courtier ; he will shew you to yourselves as you really are, divested of every external decoration and skin-deep allurements. If destitute of mental acquisitions and moral graces, the unfading lustre of an enlightened soul, “ the hidden and incorruptible man of
“ the

214 CONCLUSION.

“ the heart ;” what will it avail you that you are now fair and flattered ? The reputation of wit, the popularity of politeness, the profession of piety itself, will, in that conjuncture, be alike ineffectual. It is only the retrospect of capacity well employed, the consciousness of benevolence worthily exerted, and the principles of faith and hope possessing the mind, that will then support and gladden it.

WHERE there is nothing but a picture of virtue, or a few shadowy qualities that may subsist without any real excellence, death will hide them for ever in the night of despair. The blackness of darkness will close upon the naked and wandering ghost ; while its loathsome remains are consigned to oblivion and putrefaction in the prison of the grave, with the prospect of a worse doom hereafter. But where there is a living image of true goodness begun in this state, death will deliver it with safety into the finishing hand of Eternity, to be produced with every mark of honour in the open view of Heaven ; where its now mortal partner, rescued from the dishonours of the dust, and brightened into the graces of eternal youth, shall rejoin it in triumph, to suffer the pang of separation no more.—Everlasting Jehovah, what a crown of joy will it confer upon the preacher in that day, if this little service shall be rewarded with the reflection

CONCLUSION. 215

flexion of having contributed to the salvation or improvement of any of these young persons whom he now addresses! If ever thine ear was open to my cry, hear me, O Lord, hear me, in their behalf. • What cannot thy spirit perform, by the weakest hand? May that spirit “ seal them unto the day of redemption!”— At that glorious period, may I meet you all amongst “ the redeemed of the Lord;” happy to see you shining, with immortal splendor, in “ the general assembly and church of “ the first-born;” transported to think, that I shall live with you for ever; and joining in the gratulations of your fellow angels around the throne of God, when he shall, in the sight of all, “ clothe you with the garments of salvation, and cover you with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom is decked with “ ornaments, and as a bride is adorned with “ her jewels.” Amen.

F I N I S.





B.11. 1259

S.
f